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The Admiral of the Line ***A Complete Book-Length Novel*** . . . . . **Stephen Chalmers**

Back in the days when England and America were not the friends they are today there were ring times along the line between Maine and Nova Scotia. In the midst of them is laid this stro outdoor tale of land and sea. The *Admiral* himself is British of the British, but his son fights the other side.

The Tropic Lure ***Poem*** . . . . . **Mary Carolyn Davies**

The Eagle Mates . . . . . **Robert V. Carr**

Being of the West himself, Mr. Carr is at his best in tales of the West. And the West runs action.

Come-On Charley Invests . . . . . **Thomas Addison**

With his score at $840,000, *Charley* meets a new chance to raise his pile to the $1,000,000 la *Drew* has said he must make on his $10,000 start and his reputation of having inherited $2,000, in order to receive the real—but unreal—inheritance. This particular adventure brings him siderable excitement.

The Smoke-Cure . . . . . **Carrington Boykin**

The fire-test makes a man, or breaks him, quickly. *Smoky Jim Duffy* knew this and acted

The Maids of the *Saucy Sue* . . . . . **Albert Lee**

Another Rime of the Roaring Three.

The Adventurers ***A Four-Part Story. Part II.*** . . . . . **Arthur A. Nelson**

Sometimes you run across a story you've been waiting for a long time without realizing you waiting for it. Here is such a story. When *Alan Severn*, with his cousin and *Ingulf*, at a word Cecil Rhodes, set out upon their expedition into the unknown heart of Africa they enter into adventure greater and more wonderful than they or Rhodes himself had dreamed of. *De Roque* and *Lord Chalmes* are adventures in themselves. And *Ingulf* a still greater one.

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To Look Forward To

The March *Adventure* will come along on February 3d with another bunch of real stories for real people. On the last page you'll find a list of most of them, but right here are some to take special note of:

THE HIGHGRADER

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And you will meet **Come-On Charley** and **Ivanoff** again in new adventures. And **Alan Severn, De Roquemort, Ingulf, Chalmes,** and all the others who play their splendid parts in **"The Adventurers."**

As for the rest——

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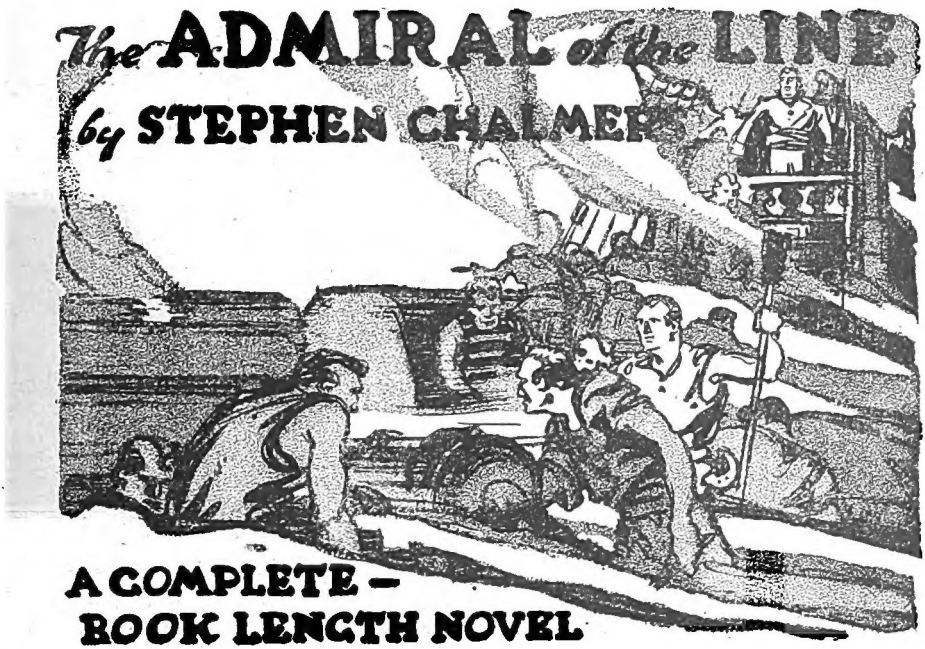

CHAPTER I

THE RETURN OF THE SCHOLAR

THERE came a loud explosion of swivels and cohorns from Deer Point where, before the homestead, the retired Admiral had planted and armed a real ship's quarterdeck.

At the same time H. B. M. A. S. (His Britannic Majesty's Admiral's Sloop) *Victory* appeared under full sail coming up from the southern end of Passamaquoddy Bay.

Admiral William Fitzwilliam Sarvice, who had been scanning the American waters and the Maine shore opposite the little Canadian island which was his by royal letters patent, was the first to sight the sloop. He lowered his brass telescope and grunted a command to Aaron Bunker, his old quartermaster and present serving-man.

It was then that the swivels and cohorns bellowed from the "quarterdeck" and the British Union Jack sailed up through clouds of powder smoke to wave a welcome from the masthead over the lawn.

"He comes!" said the Admiral, turning to his wife. "But, mizzen and main! Where's William?"

"'Ave the honor to report, s'r," said Aaron Bunker, stiffening in his blue coat and white breeches, "that Master William went a-hunting along about four bells this morning."

"Hrrmmph! That's just like him," growled the Admiral, once more turning his glass upon the *Victory* which was bowling along before a fresh southwest breeze. "Quartermaster, you will load up again. We'll give him another broadside as he comes ashore."

"Aye, aye, s'r! Cheerily-o!" chanted Aaron Bunker.

It was a great day for Campobello, and a

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gay picture its quaint people made, assembled as they were upon the Admiralty lawn to welcome David Sarvice back to the island which he had honored in honoring himself at Oxford.

The principal figure was the Admiral himself. He was in his seventieth year, but as hale and hearty, bluff and thunderous, profane and paradoxical as he had been in the days when he trod the quarterdeck of his own flagship and received the salute of Horatio Nelson, midshipman. Even here, far from his glorious England, land-poor and isolated, he never forgot the respect due himself, nor did he allow anybody else to forget it. He was King of Campobello Island.

The sunlight of that April morning in 1806 glanced off the burnished silver of his hair. He was in the full-dress uniform of his naval rank. Under the stump of the left arm, shot off at the taking of Pondicherry, he carried his best cocked hat. The empty sleeve was pinned on his broad chest under two rows of medals. Over his big, round, bull-necked head there drifted strata of smoke from the saluting guns. He was a personification of the aggressive John Bull, and his countenance seemed of wrought iron, rusted.

At his side stood Mrs. Sarvice, twenty years his junior, her face, delicate to the point of weakness, flushed with eager, nervous anticipation. She was the mother of the Admiral's twin sons, but her affection leaned to the scholar David, as the old sea fighter's to the sea-burned, field-tanned, missing William.

Behind the couple stood Aaron Bunker, the counterpart of the Admiral in age, bulk, pose, coloring, everything but the uniform of rank, and with that air which differentiates master and man. Aaron had been a powder-monkey when Sarvice was a midshipman. They had advanced in parallels.

Near the central trio was the Rev. Digby Mathias, whose professional solemnity was marred only by an amazing coat which was clerical in cut but scarlet in hue.

Behind the scarlet parson was the mob.

It was a great event, this homecoming of the scholar, David, and all the islanders were out in their Sunday clothes. Marvin Patch, fisherman, woodsman, liar, pillar of the church and champion debater of the Wharf-End Civic Forum, was on hand with a speech in his mind and the hope that he would be asked to deliver it.

Davie Lyon, the island's entire Pauper Roll, was elegant in his annual new suit (bought from the Admiral's Pauper-Fund) and with a yellow crocus in his buttonhole. The Pauper Roll was the best-dressed man on the island. Even John Burleigh, the squatter—"the encroacher," the Admiral called him—was there with his handsome wife, Katharine. Today all enmity of politics and lawsuits was set aside. David Sarvice was coming home!

The *Victory* came nearer the anchorage at Welchpool village, the island's little capital. Before descending in state to the boat landing, the Admiral addressed his "subjects."

"M' lads!" said he, "and lasses," he added, noting the gay ribbons in the crowd, "Campobello expects this day that every man will do his duty! My son David, twin brother to my son William—who ought to be keelhauled for abandoning his watch—comes home a senior wrangler in mathematics, from Oxford University.

"You don't know what a senior wrangler is, but I do. Sufficient! Therefore, when my son David sets foot on the boat landing, the orders are—three cheers! The quartermaster will then——

"Mizzen and main!" he broke off gustily. "Where's Aaron Bunker?"

As the quartermaster reappeared, somewhat out of breath, and handed something to Mrs. Sarvice, the old martinet snorted—

"Who gave you leave to go below?"

"I went for a handkerchee, s'r," replied Aaron.

"Confound the handkerchee!" growled the Admiral. "Madam," to his refined lady, "this is no time for piping your eye. Quartermaster," he resumed, "you will fire the second broadside as per orders given. Now then," to the crowd, "follow me!"

HEADED by the Admiral, the procession moved across the lawn to the gates of the Admiralty. Here the village began and its single street led circuitously to the ship wharf and the boat-landing. The route lay past the Admiral's Coöperative Store, which was not only his place of trade monopoly but his general assembly hall for the dispensation of home-made justice and insular administration, and for social functions.

In front of this store sat a long, lank, seafaring person in the stocks which the

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Admiral had brought from England for the discouragement of malefactors. The particular sin of Jack Pitch, who had sailed with John Paul Jones, was that he had uttered the words, *"Plague take the British!"* The Admiral paused in his semi-royal progress.

"Remove the ticket!" said he to Marvin Patch.

A placard, lettered with the word TREASON, was removed from the tarry one's back.

"Release the man!" was the next command.

It was done.

"Jack Pitch!" said the Admiral in a terrible voice, and pointing to the Union Jack over Deer Point. "Salute that flag and repeat after me, *'God save the King!'"*

Pitch bit a piece off his tobacco plug, which had been fruit of Tantalus in his pocket while he sat in the stocks, hitched his loose length together, casually saluted the landscape, and honored the King as per instructions. Then he was permitted to join the crowd, which presently arrived at the boat-landing.

David Sarvice came ashore in a dingey. As he stepped out on the landing, the swivels and cohorns bellowed again and three mighty cheers were given by the islanders.

The scholar was tall but not robust. His hair was black and his face slightly sallow. His eyes were large, deep and dark, but filled with that critical, straining light which sometimes marks the intense student.

"He's never a bit like his brother," remarked Jack Pitch to Ezra Batson.

"Where's William anyway?" asked Ezra, who was a prominent Burleigh adherent.

"Duckin'!" chuckled Pitch.

In another part of the crowd, John Burleigh remarked to his wife—

"Where's Betty?"

Katharine's eyes twinkled as she looked up at her big husband.

"I don't know, John. She went off with her musket before breakfast."

"So!" grunted Burleigh, with a smile.

The scholar's reception was great. The islanders crowded in between him and his parents who, a little apart from the common herd, awaited him with class dignity. Marvin Patch began his rehearsed speech on general principle.

Nobody heard a word, except the scholar, whose eye Marvin had arrested ere he began. The senior wrangler was only aware of a man working his mouth over some elegant tribute to Campobello's "progeny of l'arnin'." Then the scholar turned to resist the efforts of the Pauper Roll to hold his hand.

"I'm the pauper," said Davie Lyon humbly. "Don't ye remember your namesake, sir—Davie the pauper?"

"Oh—ah—yes—the pauper," said the senior wrangler, somewhat dazed.

The scholar's greeting of his father and mother was outwardly calm. He seemed quite concerned, however, when Mrs. Sarvice, abandoning class dignity in an access of motherly affection, threw herself suddenly upon his bosom in a fit of hysteria. The Admiral swore and she recovered. To his father, David said:

"Aha—hmm! A little grayer, sir?"

"Yes, I am!" said the Admiral bluntly. "Probably due to the fact that I'm four years and seven months older."

"Ah, yes; exactly. And—er—where's William?"

The Admiral snorted and glared angrily into the crowd.

"Aye, aye. Where the devil *is* William?"

As no one could definitely say, the Admiral threatened many forms of disciplining and proceeded with the program.

A bell was now ringing in the village. The Admiral and his wife and their distinguished son led the procession up the street to the Only Church of Old England, whereto the parson had already repaired. Presently the *Te Deum* echoed through the quiet village.

In the meantime, where *was* the missing William?

At the moment when David was being received at the landing, William Sarvice, the scholar's twin brother, lay flat on his back, sound asleep, on a point of rocks facing the Bay of Fundy on the eastern side of the island. His musket, all primed and ready for the whiskered bull-seal that refused to appear, lay beside him.

His hat had fallen off, revealing the brown of his face and the near-gold hue of his hair. His shirt was open at the neck and his body stretched six feet of brawn and sinew. Yet he was but twenty-two.

Beside him on the rock sat a girl. She was looking out over the Bay of Fundy. The day was bright and quiet, save for the southwest riffle. The big bay seemed to

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yawn. Grand Manan and the lesser islands, the Wolves, appeared topsy-turvy in mirage. Behind, the island's forests were touched with the Spring's earliest green.

Presently the girl stood up. She was about eighteen, but little more than a stripling woman in soul and body. Straight and supple as a young fir, her skin was of a smooth tan, and her hair, blown loose save for a single knot, was of a dark brown. Under a pair of high-arched brows were a pair of eyes that seemed to have borrowed their frank gray, serene blue and quick-changing mood from the sea upon which she gazed. She wore a skirt reaching a little below her knees, up to which her strong, slender limbs were hidden in the smallest sea-boots ever made for service.

For a minute the girl stood over William Sarvice. Pure mischief sparkled in her maiden eyes. She stealthily knelt beside him and in sheer, passionless deviltry kissed his brown throat.

The sleeper awoke and found the girl regarding him with mock-innocent eyes.

"What was that, Betty?" he almost gasped, rubbing his neck.

"I don't know," said she solemnly. "Maybe it was a seal."

"Haven't seen a hair of one," William grumbled, seizing his musket and getting up. "Let's go see if there are any black duck in Lily Pond."

Presently they gained the woods and struck a mossy trail, marching in file with their muskets a-shoulder, Betty Burleigh whistling the tune he whistled and trying to make the stride he made. It was the dusk of the day when William waved a farewell to his hunting-mate and entered the Admiralty.

THE meeting of the two brothers was a presentation of contrast. They did not look like distant relations, to say nothing of twin brothers. One was dark, refined, pale and esthetic; the other fair, brown, robust, and carrying with him an atmosphere of woods and sea-winds. They shook hands with outward cordiality, but in the heart of each there leaped into life again a spark of the antipathy which had often flashed between them when they were boys together.

The Admiral was curiously eying his two sons as they faced each other. He came out of a momentary reverie to turn upon William with a glare of affectionate ire.

"Now, where the devil have *you* been?" he inquired wrathfully.

William confessed to a fruitless seal-hunt with Betty Burleigh.

"Daughter of a rascally land encroacher!" the Admiral snorted. "For a son of his Britannic Majesty's Admiral, you choose strange company. You'll be clinking cups with a *Yankee* next!"

Such was the homecoming of David, the scholar. But before the family retired that night a peculiar incident arose out of William's playful reference to "the return of the prodigal son."

"No, sir," said the Admiral. "You two more remind me of Esau and Jacob. Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; while Jacob was—— What the devil was it about Jacob? Isaac—*Aaron*, I mean—Aaron Bunker! Fetch the Bible, Aaron. 'Tis the reading-hour anyway."

CHAPTER II

WHAT THE YEARS HAD BROUGHT

SITTING over his kallibogus alone before the midnight fire, the Admiral, musing on what the years might bring for his two sons, fell to thinking on what the years had brought for himself.

It was a queer story—a commingling of tragedy, comedy, knowledge and ignorance, good sense and impetuous blundering; albeit a story of bravery against hard odds.

For the Admiral's life had begun with misfortune. Although he came of the best blood in England, his own birth was marred by an accident. His father was killed at Madras while on the way home to marry his mother. What became of his mother he never knew. His earliest recollection was of being a wharf-rat around an English port. Nevertheless the wharf-rat rose, by his own determination and abilities, to walk the quarterdeck.

In the year 1781 Campobello Island had been granted him by George III., partly for valiant services rendered, but mainly to appease a fiery subject who had a growing habit of waving an empty sleeve in the faces of the Lords of Admiralty and declaring that he was no better treated for his naval services "than a bow-wow for its barking!" The Admiral colonized the island, which lay—and still lies—in those long-disputed

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waters where New Brunswick and Maine are tangled up in the mouth of the St. Croix River, around the line of demarcation.

With his young wife—a lady of high degree—his brass-dialed clock, his medals, his tempestuous tongue and temper, and a shipload of farmers and artisans and their families, he made himself King of Campobello—so much so that it was necessary at intervals for a British warship to call and remind him that George was still doing business and had no immediate need of an heir.

"The Admiralty" was the finest house on the finest site on the island. Perched on Deer Point, with the village at its left, its wide verandas and broad wooden steps faced the American shore, as if to say to the patriots who had inflicted the only racial humiliation the old sea-fighter had ever known, that herein was a British Admiral! To emphasize his attitude toward "the enemy," as he classed his neighbors across the mile-wide strait, he made the muzzles of his four guns point at Eastport, the American settlement on Moose Island, Maine.

At morning and at dusk the Admiral would promenade his "quarterdeck" on the point, survey the "enemy" through his brass telescope and snort in memory of the War of '76. And sometimes when the echoes of his sundown cohorn boomed across to the American side and the British colors ran down on the twittering rings, Admiral William Fitzwilliam Sarvice would glance across the lawn at the young oaks he had planted when he first took possession, and bark at Aaron Bunker—

"This, quartermaster, is a bit of old England!"

From the beginning John Burleigh had been the great thorn in the Admiral's flesh; worse even than the whole nation of "American rebels" across the bay. Unlike most of the inhabitants, Burleigh was on the island when Sarvice came to it with a royal seal on his title. Question: Could the King grant one subject what was another subject's by right of occupancy?

The Admiral, younger then, looked the big English squatter in the eye and decided to exercise that of which he had little reserve—tact. He offered John Burleigh a glass of kallibogus (his mixture of rum and spruce beer) and said it was "an odd complication which would settle itself." Burleigh said nothing, but drank the kallibogus and allowed it was fairly good stuff.

Then the Admiral began to reign and rule. His scepter was a wooden mallet, which he screwed into place in his empty left sleeve. He always wore the wooden fist when he wished to emphasize his remarks. Also, he drove about his island in an ancient carriage adorned with the arms and motto which he had created from his own fancy. The motto was, "Clear for Action!"

Aaron Bunker, as coachman to the Admiral, drove the only horse on the island. The animal was a seven days wonder when it arrived from England.

In the meantime, Burleigh went about his business, failing not in outward respect to the Admiral when they met, but also failing to pay rent for the land which he occupied. And all the time the adherents of Burleigh increased and settled Burleigh's end of the island, which was in the nature of a small republic. The testy old gentleman with the wooden fist boiled inwardly; but he could do nothing, no matter what he might say, for the Admiral suspected that if it came to a lawsuit the courts might sustain the squatter's rights to the land, of which he had held possession for so long.

Presently, however, the Admiral began to chuckle, for big John Burleigh came courting Kitty Prendergast, the daughter of the Admiral's carpenter. The old gentleman saw that difficulties might be solved by marrying the encroacher into allegiance.

As it was one of the unwritten laws of the little colony that no marriage was respectable, though it *might* be binding, if not performed by the Admiral, it was he who joined together John Burleigh and Katharine Prendergast. When big John was about to imprint the first conjugal salute upon the bride's lips, the Admiral, prayer-book in hand, thundered from the platform in the Coöperative Store:

"Stand back! Y'are not married yet!"

He solemnly came down from the platform, kissed the bride, glared at John Burleigh and snorted, "*Now* ye are!"

John never forgave that, and it was not the Admiral who christened Betty Burleigh, the firstborn. It was a wooden-legged parson of hybrid denomination from Hampden, Maine. The Admiral took the incident as a personal slight and the wooden leg as a personal affront. The affront was confirmed when the seagoing hybrid parson erected a chapel at Burleigh's Beach, the center of squatterdom, and came once a month to

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preach in opposition to the Admiral's divine efforts in the Coöperative Store.

In order to uphold the dignity of William Fitzwilliam Sarvice, his King and his Church, the Admiral promptly erected a real house of worship at Welchpool village and called it the Only Church of Old England. There, for a time, the Admiral, dressed in his best uniform, mounted the pulpit on Sundays and expounded divinity and the divine right of Kings, interlarded with readings of the latest laws enacted by himself (and a few by Georgius Rex) against backsliders and land encroachers.

Before the Admiral quite realized it, the wooden-legged parson (a clever fellow in his way) had the nautical divine and his theology by the heels. The Admiral, seeing his dignity imperiled, called in a real parson.

The new preacher was Episcopal. He was as much an oddity in his denomination as "Pegleg" Jones was in his hybrid sect. The Rev. Digby Mathias was color-blind. Quite recently he had ordered a new clerical coat, choosing the material himself. When the St. John tailor pointed out that it was —ahem—unusual; that is to say, for a clergyman to wear crimson, Mr. Mathias silenced him with an indignant, "Sir!" The tailor said no more and made the coat.

Of course, the Rev. "Pegleg" Jones made capital of "the scarlet parson." The Admiral, alarmed at the hybrid's following, stipulated in all land grants that grantees be "proper Church members in good standing." Such as could not prove "*proper* Church" membership moved over to Burleigh's end of the island, paid no rent and brought disputes to the squatter for settlement instead of to the Admiral.

Civil war was now raging in the colony. The island was thoroughly divided spiritually. Burleigh clinched it geographically by building a spite fence around the disputed land. The Admiral retaliated by accusing the Rev. "Pegleg" Jones of a grievous worldly sin. He had the seagoing parson arrested and, after a wordy trial on the Admiralty steps, clapped in the stocks, labeled BACKSLIDER!

"Pegleg" was in durance for one hour. When released he stole the Admiral's best dingey and escaped to the American shore. When next heard of, this seagoing parson had turned seagoing pirate, as will appear.

The adherents of Burleigh waited for some subtle retaliation on the part of their leader, but weeks, months—several years—went by and, beyond maintaining the spite fence, big John did nothing.

"Wait!" was all he said; and despite all his threats to collect rent or evict the squatters, the Admiral did nothing either.

BUT it looked as if the Admiral had triumphed. For five years he was almost undisputed monarch. And he reigned and ruled like a king in a small way. He gave entertainments to the loyalists in the Coöperative Store, to which the rebels were not invited. He exercised a royal privilege of editing the scarlet parson's sermons before he would consent to listen to them. He held and presided over his own court of justice in the Store, and his judgments and rulings paled Solomon and Solomon's glory.

Then, too, he maintained a Pauper Roll, although there was only one person on it. Davie Lyon was a victim of "shaky spells," so the Admiral allowed one hundred dollars a year for his support. Being the only commoner with an income of real money on an island where mutton and potatoes were currency, the Pauper Roll was a social lion. It was an honor to board him.

Such a character could exist only where the law of the land was eccentricity itself. Possibly the Admiral's personal peculiarities encouraged queerness in his subjects, although one of the queerest, Jack Pitch, the "pirate," denied that he was any man's subject and landed in the stocks on an average of once a week for accumulated treason. Also, Pitch developed what he called "eequinoctials" when he drank, and it was a feature of life on Campobello to hear the "gale" howling o' nights.

But, to come back to immediate essentials, the birth of the Admiralty twins, William and David, was an event of great importance to this story. Welchpool crowed and the Admiral strutted, while Burleigh's Beach asked the big squatter what he was going to do about *that*. But John just said "Wait!" And he did not get married for three years more, and when Betty was born—a single baby girl to two male chips of the roaring Admiral—Burleigh scratched his chin and smiled.

"By and by," said he, "she'll make trouble enough for both of them."

"John ain't the man he was," said the squatters sadly.

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But Burleigh upset the verdict and the Admiral's equilibrium at the end of five silent, actionless years. He suddenly sailed in his schooner, the *Katharine*, for Halifax, Nova Scotia, which then had jurisdiction of a sort over Campobello.

Had the Admiral been awake to what was in John's mind, he would have overtaken the encroacher in the Bay of Fundy and settled the land question by naval rather than legal contest. Still, the *Victory* got to Halifax in time for the hearings of the suit. Burleigh won by virtue of twenty years' occupancy of the land—fifteen years before and five years after the Admiral's arrival with the King's grant. Hence those five years of tactful indifference!

The Admiral, in his fury, told the learned King's Justice that he was "a mutton-headed fool," which horrified every one but the learned King's Justice, who knew his Admiral. Then H. B. M. A. S. *Victory* put to sea with every stitch of cloth spread, in a stern chase of the *Katharine*, the old gentleman determined to rake Burleigh fore and aft, or himself carry the case to a Higher Court, via the bottom of the Bay of Fundy. Fortunately, a fog set in and the two vessels missed each other.

This and much more was what the Admiral used to rehearse o' nights as he sat by the hearth in his "cabin aft," drinking kallibogus and snorting at the fire.

But it was all old history now, and—he wondered what the future held for the boys. Burleigh owned three square miles of land, but the rest—eighteen square miles and the bulk of the people—the rest was his, soul and body, timber and tides, allegiance and jurisdiction. It was for the boys.

CHAPTER III

THE DEEP-SEA LASS

NEXT morning—a clear, bracing April day—William was awakened by voices arguing on the lawn by the "quarterdeck." One was the Admiral's. The other, which bore the main burden of harangue, was rapid, nervous, excited and almost shrill. William arose, looked out, and saw his father and the scholar walking up and down and stopping at intervals to face one another, the Admiral critically attentive, David vehemently discursive.

"I tell you, sir, you do not realize your opportunities!" the senior wrangler declaimed. "You have an island of almost unlimited resources. You have a minor kingdom and you are King. You could develop industries here that would employ your own people and every man of Burleigh's. Where would be his title if you controlled the capital power? You have timber. You have copper. Maybe there are silver, gold and other metals. Gods, man! You are blind!"

"Pardon me, sir. I am *poor!*" retorted the Admiral.

He was nevertheless impressed by these possibilities of wealth and almost monarchical power. David's stuff was the food his vanity loved.

After breakfast William buttonholed the scholar.

"What do you want to do, David?" said he. "Ride, walk, fish, hunt, or stay at home?"

"I—er—" said David thoughtfully—"have business to discuss with my father."

"So," said William without inflection. "Then you'll excuse me. I have business at Burleigh's Beach."

"Burleigh's? I thought there was an embargo against that place?"

"There was," said William, "but I think I've managed to end it while you've been away. And by the way, David, whatever you do, whatever plans you and the Admiral make for the future—be careful. Don't upset the peace!"

"I'm not a fool."

"Of course not. Well——"

He waved his hand and set off on the North Road which the Admiral had christened after its great English namesake. This highway ran parallel with Passamaquoddy Bay for several miles, the waves washing to the left of it. On the right was a series of fisher-farmer houses, suggestive of both land and sea.

Presently the road climbed over Bald Head, a precipitous bluff from which wind and spray had blown and washed every grain of soil. Beyond this headland the road dipped toward the mouth of Otter Harbor which swept inland to the right. Where the North Road struck the insweeping sea-arm, Burleigh's Cove described a little crescent, ending in another pile of rocks.

William paused in his descent to the cove. It was a pretty picture. The bare, brown

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rocks, spotted with roosting gulls and plover, were bathed in cold sunlight. Against the Spring blue sky the massive boulders stood out in contrast with green patches of new grass and a background of spruce forest.

Snuggled in the hollow of this amphitheater was Burleigh's cottage. Under a red roof white walls were strung for oncoming Summer vines. A surrounding garden was fresh from recent delving and planting. The cottage itself faced across Otter Harbor toward the village of Burleigh's Beach, the center of the "encroachment." It was a more flourishing settlement than the loyal Welchpool, for at Burleigh's Beach every man owned his house and the land it stood on.

"Betty ahoy!" hailed William. "Ahoy—Betty!"

The door of the red-roofed cottage flew open. Betty Burleigh appeared. The sea wind defined her straight, slender figure against the cottage's white walls. She shaded her eyes and looked toward the headland.

"William—aho-oy!"

"Look!" he cried. "Toward the Beach! Pollock! Schooling!"

He saw her glance at the sea, then dash into the house. A few seconds later she was out again, tying a sunbonnet and followed by Burleigh and Katharine. While the wife studied the reappearing rifts and circles in the sea, big John hailed a man who was gathering sheep on the bluffs behind.

"Ezra!" he cried. "*Fish!*"

Ezra Batson abandoned the sheep instanter. By this time William had reached the cove.

"They're early, John," was his greeting.

"But we're ready," said Burleigh. "You and Betty take the little dory. Amos and I'll take the big one."

Betty emerged from the storehouse with two great scooping nets.

"Come on, William!" she fairly yelled. "We'll take first scoop of the season."

Katharine Burleigh stood in the doorway and watched the Admiral's son and her daughter. They were as two children, despite their years. Perhaps one day they would turn around, look at one another and discover their nakedness. Then——! Katharine wondered, but she was not afraid.

"I'm off!" cried Burleigh from the beach. "Fish for dinner!"

She waved her hand—a sea-wife's kiss—and turned back into the cottage.

William and Betty were the first to reach the schooling fish. There were a dozen boats in the race, for the men of the Beach had seen the rifts in the sea.

"Give me your oar," said Betty in an excited whisper, as a school broke water ahead. "You into the bow with the scooping-net."

William obeyed. Betty rowed quietly toward the fish. From the boat they could see the beautiful blue-green bodies rushing through the water in phalanxes, their mouths wide open as they pursued the almost invisible shrimp. William's scooping-net—a great iron ring on a pole with a depending sack net—was delved into the water like a shovel. At the same time, the fish, taking alarm, threw up their tails with a flurry of water and dived fifteen fathoms to the bottom.

"Only five eight-pounders!" said William, drawing in the net.

"First scoop anyway," said Betty consolingly. "Now you take the oars and let me try."

Just as they changed places another school broke water to their left. William swung the boat and rowed hard. When they were within two boat-lengths of the fish, the school took alarm and dived.

Betty turned a pair of blazing eyes upon the rower.

"Don't you know better than to put the boat's shadow between you and the fish?" she demanded wrothily.

"Right! I'm a lubber!" said William.

They tried again as soon as the school broke water.

"Get the sun in your back!" hissed Betty, crouched in the bow with the net.

The boat fairly plowed among the fish this time. Down went the scoop. There was a great rushing, roaring and splashing which continued in the confines of the net after the main body had dived.

"Help me here!" gasped Betty.

The catch was too great for the girl's strength. Even with William's steely muscles applied, the laden net came laboriously aboard, its unwieldy bulk a fluttering, squirming mass of great fish.

"Thirty-seven ten-pounders!" cried William, as he flung the last into the bottom of the boat.

"Shake hands, Betty lass!"

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ABOUT noon they rowed back into the cove, the bottom of their boat floored with shimmering black and quivering silver. Later, Burleigh and Ezra Batson came ashore with a dory so laden that the sea lapped the gunwale.

The squatter found William and Betty washing their hands at the pumps behind the cottage. One pumped water while the other washed in the stream. The big man watched them with a commingling of thoughtfulness and amusement.

"Pump harder!" said Betty, trying to wet her hands in a mere trickle. William's lusty arm worked the pump to such purpose that a jet of icy cold water struck Betty's wrists and sprayed all over her.

"Now see what you've done, clumsy!" she cried, dangling her soaked arms before her, while water trickled from her hair and formed a bead on her nose.

Next moment she was chasing the Admiral's brawny son around the cottage. Catching him by the barn door, she snatched the sea bonnet from his head, pulled his hair and ran her cold, wet fingers under his shirt collar.

"Don't, don't!" he gurgled. "If you do, I'll——"

His powerful arms gathered her in suddenly and a kiss was planted squarely on her red mouth. The moment she was released the flat of a little hand caught him behind the ear.

"Don't you dare kiss me when I'm vexed!" she cried.

She rubbed her cheek, and a quizzical look came into her face.

"Has David got a prickly beard?" she asked abruptly.

"Wh-what!" William fairly roared.

She colored and, stamping her little sea-booted foot, rushed into the cottage kitchen. At the same time Burleigh announced himself to the puzzled William.

"If you're willing to help split fish, Sarvice, we can muster dinner," said he.

"I must go home," said William. "My brother, you see——"

"What did you come for?" asked Burleigh dryly.

"Business," said William solemnly.

"Well, let business keep you," chuckled Burleigh. All at once he became grave and came nearer the other.

"What's your brother going to do—here?" he asked.

"Make us all wealthy, I fancy," said William with a smile.

"Thought so," chuckled big John. "He's young. But he'd better wait until the wind's right."

"How?"

Burleigh jerked his chin in the direction of the American shore.

"There's trouble brewing," said he.

"Another war?" said William lightly.

"Mmm—no, but what'll lead to it."

"Well—what do you mean exactly?"

Burleigh grew thoughtful. Then he said:

"They're getting roiled over there. Don't think England's giving them a square deal. They're going to stop trading with her, and she needs the stuff. She's at war with France."

"That does not necessarily mean war here," said William.

"It does later, for England's pig-headed. She'll retaliate. But be that as it will be. There'll be an embargo."

"How will that affect Campobello and brother David's dream of great wealth?" asked William amusedly.

"Just cast your eye over that strait," said Burleigh. "About a mile—hey? And the Moose Island boys are like us—out for a penny. There'll be money in smuggling, Sarvice, or I'm no weathercock."

"You're as bad as brother David," laughed William.

"Brother David?" said Burleigh. "Tell brother David there'll be money in nothing else for a while, and after that—powder and shot!"

Katharine came to the kitchen door and called the men to dinner. Several big pollock, stuffed with shrimps and bread-crumbs, were ready on the table. As they ate, a voice came faintly to their ears from the direction of the storehouse. It was a caterwaul of song.

We sprung a leak and manned the pumps, but still we fought the foe,
With pistols to the gunners as were scared to stay below.

"Jack Pitch," remarked Burleigh. "He's in his 'eequinoctials'—since last night. Wife," he added, after a pause, "give him a bite. He needs it, and he can help split fish."

After another pause, Burleigh glanced curiously at William Sarvice.

"A good man going to waste," said he.

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"He was with John Paul Jones—master gunner."

They spent the afternoon splitting and salting pollock. The "pirate" was sobered enough to be of assistance in chopping fins and tails.

The sun was going down behind Eastport when the work was done. William's conscience pricked him. Having received a vengeful drenching at the pump, he swung away toward the Admiralty.

"Something of a man since I first clapped eyes on him," said Burleigh, who was sitting on the doorstep with his wife and Betty as the tall figure waved a farewell from the brow of Bald Head.

"I hate the sunset," said Betty irrelevantly. "The sea gets cold-looking. I'm going in."

When Betty was gone Katharine looked at her big husband, whose eyes, as he sucked his pipe, were fixed thoughtfully on Moose Island.

"A penny for your thought, John," said Katharine.

"I was thinking," said Burleigh in his slow way, "that in years to come, when the cities grow—over there—we'll all be salting fish."

WILLIAM reached the Admiralty after the cohorn had bid the sun good night. He gained his room unobserved and guiltily removed his working-clothes. He appeared before the family in the "messroom" when the quartermaster rang the ship's gong in the hall as a dinner summons.

"I feel as if I had deserted you, David," said William.

"Oh, my father and I have been discussing island affairs," said David generously.

"So," said William, without inflection.

"Heavens!" screamed Mrs. Sarvice. "You smell of fish!"

"Don't do that, madam!" roared the Admiral. "I can tolerate guns, but——"

"I've been dressing fish over at Burleigh's," interrupted William. "They came in today."

"You choose your own company," growled the Admiral.

"Burleigh's?" said David. "Er—I met the girl this morning as I was walking. Pretty thing, but ill bred."

"She was bred on Campobello," said William.

"Of course," said David, momentarily abashed by a glint in his brother's eye. "But what I was going to say: Why catch and cure fish for Burleigh? The demand for foodstuffs increases every day—must increase as the world's population grows. Here, my dear Admiral, the sea yields a greater harvest than the land. Fishing is an inevitable local industry which should be inaugurated *now*. In fact, the thought occurs to me——"

The long harangue of the early morning, which had been kept up more or less all day, was continued through the dinner. Mrs. Sarvice and William ate in silence, the former with all eyes for her scholarly son, the latter with his gaze speculatively hovering about the Admiral's face.

The old man's rusted, wrought-iron countenance was illumined by the dream of greater power, greater glory and greater wealth, as he listened to the senior wrangler, fresh from Oxford, and like many a newly fledged graduate, charged with the reorganization of the world.

CHAPTER IV

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

AS THE days went on the situation in the Admiral's household became more defined. It was presently clear to William Sarvice that his father had fallen under the spell of the senior wrangler. By his silent acquiescence in the leadership which David had taken upon himself, William, who was the elder son by about twenty minutes, practically relinquished his birthright.

Great things were to do on Campobello, but William had no part in them. In justice to David, however, be it said that William evinced little interest in the "gigantic" schemes that were nightly bruited. The elder twin seemed deliberately to alienate himself from affairs the more David allied himself with them and the more the Admiral departed from his ancient ways and became a progressive enthusiast.

While one branch of David's little industrial army (newly mobilized) felled the woodland timbers; while another burrowed like moles in the copper-stained rocks, and a third built weirs for the trapping of fish, William brooded in the house, or fished in the old style with Burleigh's men, or tramped the woods and the shores, gunning.

Always upon his return to the Admiralty

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he would hear of some new scheme for the acquiring of sudden great wealth, and he would hear of it with a smile one moment and a frown the next.

"Damme," said the Admiral, meeting him on the lawn one afternoon, "this isn't *like* you, boy. Why don't you take a lesson from your brother David? He's working himself to death for us."

"If that's all the hurt he does anybody, I'll consider it luck!" said William dryly.

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded the Admiral.

"If you find it necessary to ask," said William, "I mean nothing."

The Admiral flushed and looked uncomfortable. He loved William. William had always been "his" son. Until David came back, he would have taken oath by William for foresight and level-headed discretion. William had been all of his left arm and part of his right. He had smoothed out party lines on the island and made the Admiral's end of the colony pay.

Of course, William was behind the times. William had not been to Oxford. Yet not once but many times of late the old gentleman had questioned inwardly the wisdom of this sudden new *régime* and had speculated on a possibly unpleasant ending to it all. But the excitement of each new scheme, planned before the old one was cold, kept him in a state of mental intoxication. The reaction had not yet set in.

"Boy!" he snorted. "I'm disappointed in you."

Later, the Admiral drowned his uneasy qualms with more of the intoxicant that made the outlook rosy—David and David's schemes. He found the senior wrangler on that particular afternoon in a room which had been converted into "business headquarters." Over a table which was littered with plans, sheets of figuring, samples of copper ore and specimens of woods, David pored with rumpled hair, strained eyes and a face that was growing more pallid every day.

"Well, my son!" cried the Admiral to the scholar. "How's the sawmill for tomorrow?"

"Everything's ready!" said David in his nervous, rapid manner. "We turn the water on the wheel immediately after breakfast. Didn't I tell you I'd get around Burleigh somehow? It only required a little intelligence. Now, look here at this map. I don't think you quite understand this, sir."

"Don't I!" growled the Admiral. "If the matter has to do with that map, I should. I made it with my one hand. What don't I understand?"

"For Heaven's sake!" cried David. "Be moderate, father! I'm frightfully nervous and all that. But look here! You see this river that begins in Burleigh's land, crosses the line into ours and then goes back for its outlet in Otter Harbor on Burleigh's side?"

"Aye," said the Admiral testily. "I'm perfectly familiar with that river—a dribble of water five miles long, and the trout in it are no bigger than my little finger."

"That isn't the point," said David impatiently. "Here where the river enters our land it is at its best. Here, then, I have erected the sawmill, having first dammed the river. You follow me?"

"Quite. You have dammed the river."

"Well, there's the situation. Burleigh is powerless to interfere. The river's ours in our own land, no matter where it starts or ends. Burleigh says it will cut off or pollute a source of his water supply. He is threatening something more than words when we start the mill tomorrow. But let him threaten, I say. Let him threaten!"

"And so say I!" thundered the Admiral, striking the table with a forceful timber fist that scattered specimens of ore and wood all over the room.

"Heavens!" gasped David, clapping his hands to his temples. "You are so frightfully tempestuous!"

"As Burleigh'll know to his cost if ever he crosses me again!" said the Admiral.

There was a scene at the opening of the sawmill next morning. Strictly speaking, that mill never sawed wood. Had one thing not interfered, another would have, for David's houses were built on sand.

Burleigh himself did not appear, but his lieutenant, Ezra Batson, did. Batson delivered an ultimatum first and the reason afterward. The reason was that the mill would spoil a useful stream which began and ended in the squatter lands. The ultimatum was that if the mill were started, Burleigh's men would wreck it!

The Admiral lost his temper and went in among Batson's crowd with a riding-crop. (Age, dignity and the possession of the only horse had decreed that he ride to the mill.) Ezra Batson met the crop with a marline spike and aimed a blow at the old gentleman's head.

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The blow fell, but not on the Admiral. At the same time Ezra Batson measured his length on the ground before William Sarvice's fist. Where William came from, none saw; he just appeared somehow in the middle of the fracas. Batson scrambled to his feet with a yell.

"Come on, boys! Smash them and their darned sawmill!"

But there was William guarding his father with a musket gripped in his big, brown, capable hands.

"Look here, boys," said he quietly. "You may have some right in this, and you may not; but I can't let you attack my father."

"I *am* your father, hey?" said the Admiral, still seeking something to wreck. "Damme, sir, you talk as if you were apologizing for your father!"

"No, sir," said William slowly. "I am not apologizing."

"I begin to think," stormed the Admiral, "that you are a confounded rebel yourself!"

William looked steadily at his father, then at David who was on the other side of the stream. As he saw his scholarly brother, a gleam of menace momentarily filled William's eyes. Then he turned to Batson and his followers.

"Go home, boys," said he. "Leave this to me."

They went with hardly a protest. Even Batson, after a glare at the Admiral but with little expression of ill will against the man who had felled him, turned and followed the others.

William would have shouldered his musket and continued his hunt, but the Welchpool men were there and he would not betray family dissension in their presence. Standing idly by, he watched them turn on the water. The wheel and the saw began to revolve, while the men cheered and the Admiral crowed and David smiled.

But in a little while the mill stopped. The dam had all but emptied itself and there was no further influx of water from the stream.

"How d'ye account for that?" demanded the Admiral of the flustered scholar.

"If you should ask me," said William, tired of the farce, "Burleigh's men have dammed the stream in their own land above here. In fact, I know they have."

"You know they have!" cried the Admiral suspiciously.

"How long, pray, have you known it?" David inquired.

William fixed his eyes upon his brother's and replied:

"About fifteen minutes. I ran across their dam as I was walking in the woods. I came this way to tell you that your sawmill is built in the wrong place—at least after having reopened old sores."

Personalities followed, ended by William walking off into the woods, disgusted that the men should have been witnesses of internal discord. The Admiral and David went home in the silence of complete failure where hopes have been strung high. David's humiliation was not sweetened by the Admiral's one blunt remark—

"He may be a rebel but, damme, he's practical!"

THIS was but one of the misfortunes that befell David in his enterprising. Before the end of the year, too, the great copper mining company had collapsed. It was not the fault of the copper. The fishing-industry, too, did not prosper under rules of exact science. The fish were indifferent to science and refused to enter David's improved weirs.

Such fish as he did catch were difficult of disposal. True, David despatched Captain Denny, sailing master of the *Victory*, with a chartered schooner laden with salt fish and undressed lumber for the West India Islands. The fish paid for the labor of taking them, but *undressed* lumber was to the West Indies what bananas are today—something to be exported to be worth anything.

So went one scheme after another, for David had so many new ones in his fertile brain that each enterprise borrowed all the warmth from its immediate predecessor.

When the Admiral, sobering, informed David that capital was getting low while returns were growing less, the senior wrangler only threw himself into more get-rich schemes. William, after one or two vain efforts to bring the Admiral to permanent mental sobriety, and equally ineffectual attempts to reason peaceably with brother David, abandoned the ship and clung closer to his musket and the beach and Betty.

When the inevitable crash came he attended a family council, prepared to share the disaster to which he had contributed negatively. But when David proposed to issue currency bearing the crest of the

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house of Sarvice and the Admiral's promise to pay gold on demand, he threw up his hands after a stormy session in the "cabin aft." David was unfortunately backed by the Admiral's vanity, which was tickled by the idea of his own crested currency.

A month or two afterward Admiralty paper was commoner on the island than real money, which had never been plentiful. Each bill was engraved with the Admiral's name in old English and the said Admiral's promise to "pay bearer on demand," etc. To the people, who knew little or nothing of banking principles, it was the dawn of a new era with as much money as the Admiral chose to manufacture out of paper. To the old sea-fighter it was a return to that regal atmosphere which was his weakness.

After this amazing step, an incident that followed should occasion not even surprise. The British Government, than which the Admiral revered nothing more, sent a revenue officer to collect duties on goods entering the island from the American shore, and this without even consulting his Nautical Highness.

This might have been forgiven or overlooked, for the revenue officer, Mr. Bly, was always absent on a fishing-trip when goods were due to arrive; but a British cruising corvette had the temerity to single out the island's cliffs for target practise.

Even this might have been compromised, but—and this was *ignoring* the Admiral—an engineer was discovered in the woods, calmly chopping trees and surveying a fine piece of land for the erection of a British military station!

At that, and when notice was served upon the islanders to drill for military duty, the Admiral's fury transcended David's indignation. He kicked—literally kicked—the engineer off the island, pitched David's learned argument and appeal to the Crown into the fire and himself wrote a letter to the King of Great Britain!

That letter is lost, but the memory of its contents remains. The Admiral told the King, in words as plain as crows against a red sunset, that if the Government persisted in making a target of *his* island, or surveying *his* land, or chopping down *his* trees for any purpose whatsoever, or taking off *his* people for military duty, it would be "*the signal for active defense against Great Britain!*"

The Admiral with his ten-by-two island, his thirty-ton sloop, his two cohorns and two swivels—and David, proposed to declare war against the country for which he had fought and lost an arm, and for which, otherwise, he would have tackled the whole American nation single-handed.

Probably, while the Admiral awaited a reply to his ultimatum, his passion cooling as his reason and respect returned, some ministerial official was asking some weary underling—

"Where, or who, or what the deuce is Campobello?"

In any case, England decided to leave Campobello and its fiery lord alone. England had her hands full enough!

France was rampant. The United States was like an uneasy volcano. Even while the Admiral awaited the reply to his war threat, the rumble of American impatience with Great Britain began to roll across the mile-wide strait.

The first Act of Embargo had been passed by the United States. There must be no more commerce with Great Britain, and no more trade between Moose Island, Maine, and its lonely little British neighbor, Campobello.

John Burleigh, when he heard the news, chuckled, and sent for William Sarvice.

CHAPTER V

IN THE MIDDLE WATCH

THE Act of Embargo tumbled even the ruins of David's grand schemes. And the Admiral was all but bankrupt. The ban placed by the United States upon trade with Great Britain cut off the revenue that he had derived from commerce with Moose Island and the Maine shore.

Not, as presently appeared, that Moose Island was strictly American territory. It was long disputed with Great Britain. Therefore the international line of demarcation between it and Campobello was the more rigidly drawn by both sides.

Despite this line, during the non-intercourse years before the War of 1812, when Moose Island was a disputed island within a stone's throw of the American main on one side and British Campobello on the other, every merchant who wished to smuggle anything the United States produced and Great Britain needed, shipped his goods to Eastport, the town on this Moose

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Island, where they managed to get the stuff across the mile-wide strait to British soil.

Sad to relate of political morality, British statesmen retaliated upon the Act of Embargo by throwing open Halifax and St. John for the convenience of the smugglers!

"Now I understand why a fool of a revenue officer was sent here!" cried David, in the voice that heralded an idea. "The British Government wishes Campobello to be a smuggling-depot for the annoyance of the American Government. Don't you see that——"

"How the devil does that help *me?*" cried the honest old Admiral. "Do you propose that I be King of the smugglers?"

"N-no," said David, his enthusiasm departing suddenly. "We are the victims of circumstance," he added wearily. "But for this inopportune occurrence my schemes must ultimately have borne fruit. Rome, my dear father, was not built in a day."

"Nor torn down in two!" the Admiral retorted.

While the Admiral and David agreed that they must not sway the balance of power by observing anything but a neutral policy, the practical William attended a meeting of the common herd at Burleigh's cottage.

Only one stranger was there—a Mr. Hiram Coffin, of Boston. Burleigh and Batson were there, of course, besides Marvin Patch and all the other island lights, even the Pauper Roll and Jack Pitch.

"Luckiest thing ever happened," said John Burleigh. "No matter what the United States does and Great Britain retaliates, it can only work up trade on both sides. We stand to be the biggest smuggling center the world ever heard of."

"I suppose," said William Sarvice, when the talk had come to the whispering stage, "if the stuff doesn't get through our way, it'll get through by another."

"That's the point!" chuckled big John.

William sat in thought. His blood was calling him to adventure, but he was not ready to admit, even to himself, that his sympathies were mixed in the matter. All he remembered was his father's financial need, the lucky geographic position of the island, and the doubtful moral consolation that the embargo would be defied anyway.

"There's going to be more than flour," said Mr. Coffin, of Boston. "The British West Indies want salt meat, dressed lumber and cargos of things they've been getting all along from the United States through British ports. These cargos can be shipped from Campobello, which is a British port, once the stuff is smuggled here. That's quite legal!

"Also, the West Indies are depending on the South for slaves since the British took to forming societies for the elevation of the heathen. The trade'll include everything from corn meal to Virginia 'raw wool,' if you'll only meet the Moose Island boys half way. I appeal to you as business men, gentlemen."

"Well," said Burleigh finally, "I guess we all understand the situation. I propose, to begin with, a try for those barrels of flour that are piling up on the Eastport wharves.

"In the meantime," he added, "when you fellows clear out, I want a word with Mr. Sarvice here."

The others understood and withdrew, Mr. Coffin, of Boston, also retiring upon the hint.

"Well?" said Burleigh, when he was alone with William.

He knocked the ashes out of his pipe and spoke with deliberateness.

"Where does the Admiral stand in this thing? It would be better for all concerned if—he failed to interfere. Understand what I mean? Maybe he couldn't be brought to see the justification."

"I'm afraid not," said the Admiral's son. "But he may have sense enough to keep his hands off."

"My father is not lacking in hard sense," said William evenly, "but all his life he has been a King's officer. I can hardly conceive of his keeping his hands off, even."

"If he doesn't this time," said Burleigh firmly, "it will only raise feeling. This island is land poor. It needs outside money. The people are going to get it, Admiral or no."

"I know," said William sorrowfully.

He might have added that the Admiral needed money—real money—more than anybody on the island.

"But first let's prove there's money to be made before I risk the storm. Let's get to work, John, and the sooner the better."

"Right!" said Burleigh, rising and knocking the ashes from his pipe. "We'll take the first risk tomorrow night."

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THIS was the beginning of the great smuggling days and nights, and of William's almost continual absence from his Admiralty bed. The first boatloads of barrels of flour were rowed across the strait to Campobello, where quick hands—William's among them—transferred the stuff across the narrow island to a cache on the Fundy side, which faces toward Nova Scotia.

All that first night, although there was not a shadow of fog, the boats came and went with muffled oars, despite two American guardships stationed close by the line to prevent smuggling—the *Wasp* and the *Chesapeake*.

Next night the game was played on a greater scale, and for many a night thereafter. If it were foggy or moonless, sloops, dories and even Indian canoes ran the gantlet, and the men on the British side carted the contraband to the cache. Strange ships appeared in the night on the Fundy side, took aboard cargos that came out of the black woods and sailed for St. John, or Halifax, or directly for the West Indies where the valuable freight could be landed at enormous profit, if an American privateer, commissioned to support the embargo, did not lay across the smuggler on the way.

On the American side of the line, at Moose Island, American revenue-spies—smugglers themselves or of smuggler sympathies—were stationed about fifty rods apart on headlands and in coves. They had a convenient habit of falling asleep at proper intervals, and when they awoke they received from mysterious hands fifty cents for every barrel that had disappeared during their deep slumbers.

PRESENTLY embargo conditions had raised the smuggling business to its height. One hundred and fifty thousand barrels of flour, not to mention other American products, had crossed the line in two months, despite spies, revenue officers, cutters and many-gunned guardships. Without letting war loose at once, what could the *Wasp* and the *Chesapeake* do when there were three British armed vessels—*Squirrel*, *Pogge* and *Hunter*—lying in wait at the line as a welcoming convoy for embargo defiers? No wonder the smugglers laughed. No wonder Eastport became a hotbed of worse iniquities than defeating an embargo. No wonder the old Admiral, surveying the tactics of both sides through his brass telescope, shook his head and growled to Aaron Bunker:

"Two wrongs don't make a right. Damme, why don't they *fight!*"

When William and John Burleigh came to figure them, the profits after two months were beyond their highest expectations. William's share, among five or six others, amounted to over five thousand dollars. As big John began to count out the money, William stopped him.

"No," said he. "I'll take it in Admiralty currency."

Burleigh smiled curiously and struck a gold piece on the table.

"Think it better than this?"

"It suits me better," said the Admiral's son.

"Maybe. But what makes you think I can muster over five thousand dollars in your father's paper money?"

"Tell the truth, Burleigh," said William dryly, his blue eyes settling calmly upon the other's face. "You've been collecting and accumulating that currency."

"Well?"

"You had a perfect right to," said William quite evenly. "You also have the right, when you have collected the best part of the issue, to embarrass my father with a demand for payment in coin of the realm.

"In time," he added, without accusation or anger, "you might even acquire control over that part of the island which you don't at present own. Only, Burleigh, you could never do it while I could stop you. Pay me in Admiralty paper."

Burleigh laughed.

"I believe you're right, boy," said he frankly. "I did have some thoughts on the subject. I would do nothing to the Admiral he would not do to me."

But he went to a cupboard, nevertheless, and fetched several packages of Admiralty notes.

WHEN William appeared in the "cabin aft" that evening he found the Admiral and David together.

"Well, sir!" said the old gentleman testily. "So you'll do us the honor of your company? May I ask where the devil you've been?"

"Smuggling," said William quietly.

"What!" shouted the Admiral, at once in a towering rage. "Is this a jest?"

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"It all depends on the view one takes," said William. "But you mean, Am I in earnest? Yes. I've been helping lift the embargo placed upon business by the Americans."

It was a piece of wordy tact. It laid the situation bare in the aspect which would most appeal to the Admiral. For a moment the old man forgot his uneasiness about the doings of the war vessels. He might have been won over in that moment had not David inserted two particular words as a counter wedge.

"*Smuggling!*" he cried. "But the family *honor*, my dear brother!"

"Yes, the family honor," said William, his eyes glinting as he faced his brother. "Your schemes, my dear brother, your so honorable and respectable schemes have placed the family honor on paper—*this* paper."

The Admiral, who was about to break in upon the brothers' fencing with a ponderous sweep at the heads of both, stopped open-mouthed at the prodigious quantity of his own signed paper that William produced and laid on the table.

"Where—— What the devil——" he sputtered.

"Admiral," said William, respectfully but firmly, "aside from the intentions which I know could not be other than honorable, when did you expect to take up this paper?"

"Sir!" thundered old Sarvice. "How dare you address such a question to *me?*"

"You do not answer the question, Admiral."

"Answer it! I'll see you dead first!"

"If I may be permitted to interfere——" began David, but the Admiral and William silenced him, the latter with a look, while the former roared:

"Avast there! I can do my own wrangling when it comes to an *argument!*"

"There is not even a difference here, sir," said William, smiling. "Merely this: You issued this currency to cover money wasted in schemes which seem, unfortunately, to have been unpractical and impracticable. In short, you have, as it were, borrowed money which you see no immediate prospect of repaying. These notes, at least, will never make demand on your honor or your promise to pay. May I return them, sir, as my contribution to the depleted family exchequer?"

"The earnings of a smuggler," murmured David.

"The earnings of a smuggler!" roared the Admiral, catching the murmur which served as a reminder of the family honor.

"Good money, I believe. It bears your name, sir," said William with smiling lips but a sinking heart.

"A smuggler, I said!" rumbled the Admiral.

"As you will, then," said the smuggler, willing to convince by good-natured argument. "A smuggler who plays the game according to his own light, as the Americans, represented by revenue spies and guardships, play it according to theirs, and as the British, represented by certain open ports and protecting warships, play it according to their ideas of right and honor."

"Right and honor," said the Admiral, ominously calm, like the sea before a cloudburst. "What the devil does a smuggler know about right and honor? What the devil has an individual to say about right and honor when his masters declare war? Choose your side and be done with it, and don't prowl around both camps like a jackal snapping at scraps."

William passed over the insinuation and the simile and came to the main question.

"How, sir, can an individual conscientiously choose sides if he can not recognize an unjust embargo, or, on the other hand, approve the British injustice that compelled it?"

William could have bitten his tongue off the moment he uttered the last words.

"British injustice that compelled an unjust embargo," the Admiral echoed slowly. "Was that what you said, my boy?"

There was something awe-inspiring in the regret and lingering quiet of the old man's utterance.

"I'm sorry, sir," said William quickly.

"Sorry?" said the Admiral, his voice husky with something more than suppressed patriotic indignation. "That won't help much, unless—— Explain yourself."

William hesitated. There was much he could have said about his views of recent British acts and American reactions, but it would have been murdering his old, race-proud father.

"Isn't it possible that the British are ever wrong?" cried William, in despairing answer to the Admiral's increasing glare.

"Sir," said the Admiral, and now the

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rumble of the storm was distinct, "nothing is infallible. But when one speaks of one's country, one's King and one's Government, there is no such word as 'wrong.' And, sir—" he lifted the wooden fist to his brow, tilted his chin and said in a voice that was low, tense and vibrating—"I am his Britannic Majesty's Admiral. *God save the King!*"

Then his calm vanished and the tempest burst. He picked up the packages of notes and hurled them into the fire. He broke out in a torrent of deep-sea profanity that would have been a marvel of entertainment had the occasion been less serious.

"You common smuggler!" he raved, while David held his hands to his nerve-racked temples. "You traitorous, treasonable mutineer! You have disgraced your name, prostituted your birthright, forsworn your heritage, your King, and your father who was your King's Admiral and your country's servant. Look at that!" he roared, raising the wooden fist above his head.

WHILE the storm progressed, William had remained with his eyes fixed upon the fire, which was happily destroying over five thousand demands against his father. But at the challenge he raised his eyes and then, instinctively, his hand. He suddenly remembered having been called upon to look at that grotesque wooden fist before and having saluted it then as now.

The Admiral seemed to recall the incident, too. It was a truant boy and a black duck and a voice that said, "Why don't you thrash me, sir?"

And the Admiral, holding up the maimed arm, had replied, "*That's* why, boy."

Now the old man's face turned from purple to gray before some counter wave of emotion. But the rock of his pride defied it.

"I wish I'd cracked your skull with it!" he said hoarsely, bringing down the mallet on the table with a crash. "*Take your clearance papers!*"

William started violently. What had his father said just then? Was he in earnest? Or was it but the fury of the moment?

"You mean—— What am I to understand you as saying, Admiral?" he asked lightly, hoping his father might seize the off-handedness to remake his speech.

Over the Admiral's head William saw David pass out, quietly closing the door after him.

"What do I mean?" the Admiral snarled. "You are seaman enough to understand what clearance papers are—things smugglers dispense with. You are at liberty to go, sir—to leave this port—my house—to sink or swim, and be——to you either way. And don't drop anchor in this haven again until your manifest shows you are honest. Is that clear enough?"

"It is—very clear," said William, conscious of sudden years added to his age.

He left the room. As the door closed the Admiral spun around.

"David, my son——" he began, and discovered that David also was gone.

A revulsion of feeling seized him. He felt like a castaway in an open boat. The matter of David's disappearance at the moment when he needed support struck a kind of terror to his old heart.

"David!" he cried, a tremor in his big voice. "David!"

The door opened and David stepped into the room. The Admiral, keyed to the pitch where impressions come and go quickly, instantly thundered—

"Damme, you were *eavesdropping!*"

Hardly knowing what he did, he seized the first thing his hand touched and pitched it blindly at his other son. A heavy volume on Hydrographic Survey grazed David's head and struck the wall, dislodging a picture which crashed to the floor. David vanished, shutting the door with a slam.

The Admiral groaned and snarled.

"Helpless and alone! Oh, how sharper than a thankless tooth——"

He stopped short in the twisted quotation, realizing how badly off he was in balance. He sank into his big chair and glared into the fire where he had considered Esau, Jacob and other matters.

Then the reaction came. He was too old for the furies of his younger days. His muscles ached, his nerves quivered, his heart palpitated. His eyes, filled with misery, were fixed on the heap of paper ashes.

"Aaron—Aaron Bunker!" he cried, beating feebly on the chair-arm.

The quartermaster entered cautiously, saluting with each hand alternately, like a boxer on the defensive.

"Aaron!" said the Admiral huskily. "Our boy's gone—Master William."

"Adm'ral," said Aaron, "can't nothing help it?"

There were tears in the eyes of the

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seventy-year-old servant. The Admiral saw them and all but gave way himself. But he swallowed his real feelings, arose to his feet and squared his chest.

"No!" said he.

It was the last shot in his locker.

"*No!*"

And after a pause:

"Clap on the hatches, quartermaster. It's two bells in the middle watch."

CHAPTER VI

WILLIAM TIRES OF SMUGGLING

WILLIAM went to bed. He even slept after an hour or two. There was no need to be melodramatic. When a man is preparing for a long journey from his father's house, his lodging for one more night and a sustainer in the shape of breakfast are the least that may be allowed him.

The Admiral probably agreed with him in this, for he expressed no surprise when William took his usual place at the breakfast table. He even grunted a surly good morning in the direction of the offcast.

Nothing unusual happened at breakfast. Of late William had not been talkative. The Admiral and David carried the discussion, while Mrs. Sarvice nibbled toast and criticized the eggs and supported David when the Admiral argued him into a corner.

After the meal William returned to his room. Ten minutes later he came back, kissed his mother in the hall, took his musket and went out. As he crossed the lawn he informally saluted the Admiral who was scanning the American shore from the "quarterdeck." Presently William was on the North Road, swinging along with his gun a-shoulder.

The last he saw of the proud old man on the "quarterdeck," the Admiral was ostentatiously studying the blockhouse which the Americans were building within the new fort on Clark's Hill, behind Eastport, Moose Island.

William tramped along the North Road in no happy frame of mind, although the new situation was not entirely unexpected.

He reached Burleigh's Cove within the hour. Katharine, seated on the porch among the vines, greeted him with a friendly smile.

"What has come over you and Betty?" said she. "It seems to be David now."

William stared.

"I've been so busy," he said, "I haven't seen her for — for weeks. I didn't know——"

"Men should never be too busy where women are concerned," said Katharine. She looked at him earnestly for a moment and seemed about to say more; but, "John is inside," was all she added.

William found Burleigh smoking a morning pipe. The younger man stated his case in a few words.

"Too bad," said John.

After a silence on both sides, he added:

"Hope he doesn't blame me for this. I couldn't be sorrier for him or you. What are you going to do, Will?"

"Be killed for a sheep. May as well."

Burleigh smoked for a while. Then he spoke, emphasizing his words with his pipe stem, as was his way when in earnest.

"One thing. You can't stay around my house. 'Twould seem to the Admiral I did it to spite him. I'll not meddle, nor appear to."

William filled his pipe from Burleigh's tobacco bag. For fifteen minutes the two men smoked, William in the silence of despondency, big John in deep thought. Suddenly Burleigh knocked the ashes from his pipe against the toe of his sea-boot.

"Look here," said he. "I wouldn't like to profit by this split over to the Admiralty; but here's a thing for your good as well as mine. Feeling as the Admiral does, there'll be trouble sooner or later if we carry on business his side of the fence."

"Surely," said William.

"Right off the north end of the island—my end," Burleigh continued, "there's a broken-off piece—Head Harbor Island. A channel runs in and out behind this little island. It's deep water and clear going, just right to make it the place for us. There's a log shack on the island—in the deep of the woods. Built it there myself for lumbering. Seen it?"

"I have," said William, beginning to see light.

"That island and the channel behind were made for us," said Burleigh. "Not only does the island hide the channel, but it covers a little pocket of water that runs in off the channel."

"So," said William.

"As long as an American privateer does not see a vessel enter the channel—and that's only a matter of lookout — the

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embargo runners can lie snug in the pocket and unload their stuff into the woods. British vessels can do the same, loading up. The main thing is one good man to direct and be on the spot to handle the stuff and the cash, and perhaps another man for lookout and general handy boy. Suppose, Sarvice, you occupy that shack for a while?"

One hour later William rowed out of Burleigh's Cove on his way to the little channel at the north end of the island.

The last thing that interested him as he left Campobello was a slender lithe figure standing on a point of rocks below Bald Head. Her eyes were shaded by her hands and she was looking toward the boat.

William paused on his oars with a lightening of his heart. He put his own hands, trumpet-like, to his mouth and would have hailed as of old, but he suddenly made the discovery that she was looking at another boat. It was the Admiralty dingey, and David was rowing it toward the point where Betty stood.

JACK PITCH was chosen for lookout and handy man at the new base of smuggling operations. When he joined William at Head Harbor Island he was put ashore like a sack of potatoes and was as inert. But in two days he was sober and willing to keep so, he declared.

"It looks to me," said he in his nasal way, "as if there'd be enough ockipation here to keep a man sufficiently stimmilated without."

Pitch was right. His duties were exacting and exciting. He was kept in a state of high nervous tension, which was the seemingly strange cure for his disease.

It was his duty to report each vessel and its character the moment the craft hove in sight, and to set or remove a red flag. If the red flag fluttered on its short staff it was safe for a smuggler to enter the secret channel. If the flag was missing, the smuggler cruised around until the flag, or the reason for its absence, appeared. Usually the reason was a second sail in the offing, a sail which might be a privateer, when the smuggler would show his heels, or it might be a second smuggler, or a British trader, when the flag would presently offer welcome and refuge to both.

William's duties were less exciting. They were more the labors of a Port Captain, or agent, than of a smuggler king. To the semi-circling channel between Campobello and the broken-off island and into the secret pocket of water that branched from this channel, came American schooners, British traders and the smaller craft that ran the gantlet of the line of demarcation. William managed the entire clearance work of the smuggler haven.

Of his father he heard nothing unusual, save that he had armed the *Victory* and was ready to sink any smuggler that defiled his shores. Beyond this, the Admiral was, as Pitch reported at intervals, "goin' about his business like a twenty-year-old" and was "a marvelous cusser for his age!"

Occasionally, also, William indulged in a peculiar little ceremony. After each settling day with Burleigh, he would stroll into the Head Harbor Island woods, leaving the "pirate" on guard. In some dim chancel of the cathedral-like spruce forest he would build a fire and squat beside it with his pipe between his teeth. When the fire was glowing wood-ash, he would take several packages of Admiralty currency from his pockets and burn his father's paper dollars one by one.

That settling day came when Burleigh admitted that he had no more Admiralty currency with which to pay William's share of smuggling profits.

"You'll have to take it in dishonest gold now," said big John with a laugh.

"Good!" said William.

So the demands against the Admiral, which the shrewd squatter had been collecting for his own speculative purposes, were apparently exhausted. There might be a few still in circulation, but William considered his self-appointed task fulfilled. And from that day he was consumed with a restless desire to abandon a business which itself had no particular appeal to him, especially when open adventure was calling the red blood in every quarter of the seas.

A few days later he was seated in the woods before the shack, brooding, when Jack Pitch came through the trees with a grin on his loose-skinned, wrinkled, sun-dried face.

"I reckon," said Pitch, "Miss Betty'll strike her colors to Mister David afore long. He's been makin' signals for some time, an' now they're everlastin'ly cruisin' in the same wind."

William looked up with a frown. Before

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he could speak, a trill of laughter came on the wind from the seaward side of the little island. The forest hid the ocean and the source of the sound. Pitch jerked a thumb over his shoulder and chuckled.

"She sure should ha' been borned a boy," said he. "Beatin' about that tricky open water in a dory with a rag h'isted."

"You need have no concern for her," William began to say, when there came a long-drawn cry down the wind. It was a cry of distress, but it came from no woman's throat.

William started to his feet and, followed by the "pirate," ran toward the danger point.

"I knowed she'd get him on the ear if he didn't quit," chuckled Pitch. "Guess she's bounced him clean overboard."

When William reached the clear beach he saw the situation at a glance, although he did not at once understand it. Some distance out was a dory with a little sail on it. Its late occupants, Betty Burleigh and David Sarvice, were both in the water, and their struggles had carried them some distance from the drifting craft.

Betty and David were close together in the water. Betty was talking rapidly, which led William to think the matter something of a jest. Betty was an excellent swimmer. David——?

All at once William remembered that his brother could not swim a stroke. At the same time a fierce flame burned in his brain and a voice chuckled out of a momentarily savage heart—

"*Let him drown!*"

But like lightning came a stab of remorseful agony and a full comprehension of exactly what had happened.

Pitch was probably right. There had been some fool play in the topheavy dory. Betty had playfully struck at David and he had fallen overboard. Then the plucky girl, realizing instantly what William had been slow to remember, had dived to the rescue.

"Pitch!" snapped William, tearing off his seaboots. "Get a boat—quick! There's a current there and she can't manage him. They'll both drown!"

The last words were lost in the roar of his big body taking the water. Pitch did not wait to see him come up and strike out. The old gunner was running to the pocket where the boats were.

William reached the side of the drowning pair none too soon. He saw at a glance how it was. Betty could save herself still if she let David go and swam for her own life; but apparently she had no intention of abandoning the victim of her folly.

Her face was pale through the wet hair that streamed over it. Her little white teeth were set together and one slim arm encircled David's shoulders. David seemed unconscious and his head was repeatedly submerged, despite her efforts to keep it up.

"Betty—aho-oy!" came a hail from close by.

"William!" she gasped, and then her own head went under.

She came up coughing, half strangled with sea water. She would have gone down again, borne by the helpless weight of David, but William's long right arm slipped around her.

He saw that she was practically exhausted. Swimmer as she was, she could never reach the shore unassisted—now. It was to be a choice between David, his brother, and Betty, whom he loved.

Yes. He knew it now. He could lose anything in the world but Betty. As for David——

"Let him go!" he commanded sharply.

"I can't! I won't!" she gulped. "I did it. I——"

"Let go, or I'll tear you from him!" William almost snarled, laying a powerful hand on the arm that encircled his brother.

Their eyes met in a battle of will, there in the salt sea. She saw the gray glare in his and misunderstood its meaning.

"I won't!" she hissed. "You hate him! 'Tisn't *me*. You hate *him!*"

Her eyes blazed up at his. Then a haze came over them and her face took on the bluish shadow of departing consciousness. Her arm relaxed its hold and she rolled helplessly backward in the water. But William's arm was still about her, while his left hand, which had clutched David in order to relieve her of his weight, held fast there, too.

IT WAS the rare moment when a man is called to choose between a life and a life. He had to decide quickly. At all costs—even the cost of all three lives—he would not abandon Betty. But after her last words he dared not abandon David.

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In his heart, despite that mad moment before he plunged, he had no desire but to save him; but if he could not, in order to save Betty, could he ever convince her that she had accused him wrongly, that fate decreed the death of one, that——

A groan burst from William's lips as he thought of his mother and the Admiral who had already "buried" one son. But it was no time for psychological threshing. Only his instinct, the same instinct that rebelled against abandoning either, urged him in his extremity to save both!

He had no knowledge of the science of life-saving but he had his great strength, and there was more than life at stake here. The shore was one hundred and fifty yards away. The current was setting diagonally, but for the most part against him.

Could he do it? Could he even hold up until the boat came? The dory was out of the matter, having drifted seaward.

How he did it he never knew. What delayed Pitch, Pitch never could explain, save that he had made the best of time and broken an oar. When the "pirate" brought a boat to the seaward side, he thought it was all over. Save for the drifting dory, the sea was blank!

But presently he saw three forms rolling in the surf. Pitch rowed toward them and sprang out. He dragged Betty out of the backwash, then turned to see William Sarvice feebly hauling at his unconscious brother.

One minute later they were safe on the beach—safe, if Betty did not die and David was not already dead.

When Betty revived, William was standing near her, panting deeply. She gave him only a glance; then, with a sob of misery, crawled on her hands and knees to David.

"David! David!" she wailed. "I didn't mean it!"

"He isn't dead," said William in a voice that was startlingly like the Admiral's. "Cursed milksop! Am I to cover his shortcomings all my life?"

Betty looked up, amazed. This was so unlike William, and the man who stood there with his arms across his chest was unlike William in appearance. He was either not a whit exhausted, or he was keyed to the pitch of physical anesthesia. He was breathing deeply and blazing anger stamped every feature of him.

"As for you," he fairly snarled at Betty, "next time you would go sailing be a woman in your manners, or take a *man* with you!"

It is probable that he hardly knew what he was talking about. He had done a herculean thing and was suffering the reaction. Certainly Betty did not understand, but she suspected that he was trying his best to convey his contempt for the joint authors of the situation. The injustice of this fancied attitude struck her hard. Before she knew it, she herself had plunged into the abyss out of which he was raving.

"I hate you! Hate you! You brute beast!" she hissed; then fell to sobbing wildly.

Possibly her violence helped him. He made no reply, but turned and walked into the woods. Pitch noticed that he reeled slightly as he walked. The "pirate" shook his head at Betty.

"Young woman," said he sagely, "don't never heed a man or cross him when he's like that. I've seen them butt their heads on a wall when they was—like that!"

Later, William came back to the beach. He was pale but very quiet. Pitch had recovered the dory and David was conscious, though too sick to care about his surroundings. Betty, thinking on Pitch's remark, left William severely alone, in case he might still be "like that."

But she watched him with a new and fearful respect. He did not look at her. He seemed unconscious of her presence, and did not even say farewell when he placed her and David in the dory and sent them back to Campobello in the care of Jack Pitch.

When Burleigh came to Head Harbor Island that night, William did not speak of the afternoon's affair.

"I'll take my share," said he abruptly. "In gold. I'm tired of this. I quit the game."

"So?" said big John. "I've seen it coming. What will you do next?"

"Fit out a privateer and rove—rove!"

He repeated the word almost wildly.

"A privateer," said Burleigh with a smile, "is a plain pirate."

"Call me a pirate then," said William impatiently. "My share, please."

That night William Sarvice disappeared. So did Jack Pitch, the master gunner for John Paul Jones.

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CHAPTER VII

THE KING OF MOOSE ISLAND

IT WAS always a toss-up who was the leader of Eastport, the smuggler town on the so-called American side of the line. Some said Captain John Shackford, who owned half a dozen schooners and was called the King of Moose Island. Others said Sam Tuttle. There was no personal feeling between John Shackford and Sam Tuttle on that account.

"Good Lord!" said Samuel, "this town's a con-demned sight more than one man can handle anyway!"

It was. Eastport, which sprang out of embargo conditions, was generally conceded to be the "wickedest spot in the two Americas"—a den of iniquity, said the pious to whose ears came, luridly garnished, tales of the doings of smugglers, blockade-runners and embargo-smashers.

No matter, however, what element the neutral geographic position of Moose Island brought to Eastport just before the War of 1812, Captain John Shackford, who had fought in the Continental Army, and Samuel Tuttle, Esquire, also a patriot-fighter, were good Americans. Their sin was that of William Sarvice. They had views.

They had been peaceful settlers in Eastport when it was but an Indian trading-station. Shackford ran a Boston packet, the schooner *Patty*, once a week, while Sam Tuttle conducted a general store. When the first embargo law was enacted, Shackford and Sam Tuttle had the choice of suspending business and being ruined, or continuing business and being ruined, or ignoring the embargo and remaining prosperous.

As they did not approve "Mr. Jefferson's embargo" they remained prosperous.

In marked contrast to most boom towns, there was roistering in Eastport by day and quiet by night. By night all men were busy—the smugglers plying their craft, the revenue-officers pursuing them, or pretending to; the naval officers patrolling the bay and firing desultory shots at embargo-smashers, and the soldiers, called in by a careworn collector, aiding in sudden raids upon warehouses.

On the previous night, Mr. Delesdernier, the collector, summoned Captain Swett, the commander of the new Fort Sullivan which had attracted the Admiral's snorting interest. The collector had heard that Samuel Tuttle, Esquire, was planning to "send over the river" a thousand barrels of flour.

"I don't know how it got here," said the collector wearily, "but—it's here. Captain, I require your military assistance to raid the warehouse of Samuel Tuttle."

Headed by Captain Swett and Mr. Delesdernier, the soldiers marched to the warehouse. Entrance was demanded and obtained. They found Sam Tuttle—a little old man with a round face and a twinkling eye—seated on one of a thousand barrels of flour and smoking a long clay pipe.

"Mr. Tuttle!" cried Mr. Delesdernier.

"At your service, sir!" replied Samuel.

"Everything is seized, Mr. Tuttle," said the collector. "The warehouse is surrounded by soldiers!"

A change came over the little man's face. He took the pipe from his mouth and spake thus:

"Gentlemen, I am here upon my own soil, under my own flag, in defense of my own property and of my personal honor. Do I make my meaning clear?"

In spite of their power and authority, the collector and the Captain retired, for the point which Samuel Tuttle had made was that an American collector and American soldiers could not act save upon American soil. If the disputed Moose Island was British, as some claimed, then the American collector could not act. If it were American soil, as the collector's presence and assumption of authority argued, then Sam Tuttle and his flour had every right to be there. No matter what his intentions *might* be, he was not as yet guilty of any violation of law.

"It was a con-demned outrage!" chuckled Sam Tuttle to John Shackford, whom he visited next night.

"But the flour disappeared all the same. How was that, Sam?" asked Shackford with a twinkle.

"How should I know?" said Samuel. "Ask the guard they left there all night."

"Poor Delesdernier!" said Shackford with a laugh.

"It's a fair fight," said Sam Tuttle, spreading his fat legs before the blaze on Shackford's hearth. "When they prevented your *Hannah*, an American schooner, entering this, an American port, Thursday morning, they played the game once too

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often. Our man will be here tonight."

"What's his name, by the way?"

"Ssssh!" said Samuel, placing a fat finger on a fat nose and closing one eye. "He's Captain Campbell to whom should ask, but between you and me and the flour barrel, he's a son of——"

There came a discreet tap at the door. Shackford's wife popped in her head.

"John Shackford and Sam Tuttle," said she, laughing at the pair they made, "there's a very handsome young man and a very ugly old one come to see you."

"Show them in, wife. Show them in," said John, glancing at Tuttle.

Entered a tall, blue-eyed, almost golden-haired man. He was attired in the uniform of a Captain of no particular nationality. A light sword swung beside a pair of tight-breeched, white-stockinged legs.

Behind him came a long, lean, dried-up, pig-tailed seaman of uncertain age. This man was clad in a blue, brass-buttoned coat and a pair of white duck trousers. A cutlas dangled at his side.

"CAPTAIN SHACKFORD," said Samuel Tuttle, Esquire, arising ceremoniously, "I present Captain William Campbell, of the privateer *Fairplay*, and—and——"

"Pitch, sir," put in Campbell's companion. "Jack Pitch—gunner."

"Be seated, Captain Campbell," said Shackford, who was wearing a faded old Continental uniform, "and you, too, Pitch—gunner."

They exchanged amenities. That is, Shackford, Tuttle and Campbell did, while the "pirate" folded and unfolded his long legs in fidgety impatience to get down to practical matters.

"Well," said Campbell at last, "you know why I am here. You can talk freely before Pitch. He is a man of considerable experience."

Pitch coughed and hitched his chair.

"So," said Shackford. "Well, there is, and has been for some time, a perfectly comprehensible feud between the revenue collector, Mr. Delesdernier, and Mr. Tuttle and myself. Mr. Tuttle and I do considerable business between Boston and Moose Island—and other places.

"It is a fair fight, Captain Campbell—a battle of wits. We complain only when the collector oversteps his authority and refuses the port to our vessels. I take it that the collector, finding himself unable to stop the smuggling of restricted goods across the line to British soil, is trying to cut off the American sources from which they come to this ultimate American port."

"I have understood the situation for some time," said Captain Campbell.

"About six months ago," continued Shackford, "Delesdernier refused to let my schooner, the *Industry*, unload flour here. The *Industry* put back for Boston, although I have reason to believe she discharged her cargo elsewhere."

"So I believe," said Campbell with a smile, while Tuttle chuckled.

"Several days ago—two, to be exact," the King of Moose Island went on, "he refused the port to my schooner, the *Hannah*. The *Hannah* sailed again. Unfortunately, Mr. Delesdernier was ill pleased when he heard how the *Industry*, in obeying his orders that it leave the port, doubly defeated his ends by landing her cargo directly on—on British soil.

"To score for that, he has this time commissioned a certain Captain Jones, in command of the privateer *Weasel*, to watch the *Hannah* and seize her should she attempt to land her cargo at—Head Harbor Island, for instance, or Castine, where it so happens the *Hannah* is at this moment bound.

"We did not learn of the *Weasel's* commission until after I had issued my orders to Captain Edward Lank, of the *Hannah*. Lank is, I believe, a Campobello man?"

"He is," said Captain Campbell evenly. "I take it my commission is to protect the *Hannah* and her cargo from the *Weasel*."

"You need have no scruples," said Shackford. "This *Weasel* is a pirate—nothing more or less. Her master is the same Jones who broke into a British Captain's house at Beaver Harbor during the Captain's absence. He and his precious crew stole fifteen barrels of sugar, the family's clothing and even the children's toys, while the Captain's wife was not spared insult."

"I'd like to lay across this Captain Jones," said Campbell, his eyes flickering.

"Beg pard'n, gentlemen," said the gunner, Pitch, who had been making signals of distress. "Do you happen to know as how this Cap'n Jones has a *wooden leg?*"

"That's the very man!" laughed Tuttle.

"An', beggin' pard'n, was he oncet a parson?"

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"A parson he was," said Sam. "From Hampden, Maine. Was put out of his chapel for backsliding. Said to be a son of John Paul Jones, the privateer."

"That's a lie!" said Pitch bluntly. "Beggin' pard'n, s'r—not meanin' you. I knows this Pegleg Jones and there's lots over the river as knows him better. As for him bein' the son of my pree-vious commander, Cap'n John Paul Jones, why, plague take the British, the man as took the *See-rapis*, me as master gunner, couldn't *be* father to a peg-legged pirut!"

The silence that followed the gunner's speech was odd.

"Mr. Pitch," said the King of Moose Island slowly, "my name is Shackford. Does it suggest anything or anybody in connection with your Paul Jones days?"

Jack Pitch's face became stupid with surprise. But all at once the intelligence of memory beamed in the salt-cured, sunparched face. It was just a flash, succeeded by a look of discomfort and regret.

"Was his name Will?" asked John Shackford, leaning forward.

"Aye, aye, s'r," said Pitch uneasily, to the mystification of Captain Campbell, though Sam Tuttle seemed to understand. "Aye, aye, s'r—Will Shackford."

The old Captain shook his head. It was clear that some ill had overtaken Will Shackford.

"He was my brother," said the King of Moose Island simply. "He was captured on the *Dalton*, privateer, and confined in the Old Mill Prison for three years. When released he served in the Continental Navy under John Paul Jones. This is the first word I've had of him in nearly thirty years."

Captain Shackford turned slowly and looked at Jack Pitch. The "pirate" was the most unhappy person in the room. He squirmed in his chair and looked everywhere but at Shackford's eyes.

"Well—out with it! What happened to my brother Will?"

"Aw, Cap'n, don't ax me!" pleaded Jack Pitch. "Maybe it warn't your Will Shackford——"

"Out with it!" the old man commanded sternly.

"He—he—— I mean——"

Then Jack Pitch braced himself and spoke straight from the shoulder.

"I seed him afore the old *Bon Homme Richard* went down, lyin' acrost a burst gun with a broken ramrod held in his two shut fists!"

"So," said the old man in the faded Continental uniform.

He turned and looked at the fire. And nobody spoke until Shackford himself picked up the broken thread.

"Well," said he, with a forced smile, "you'd better sail at once, Captain Campbell. Get to Castine as fast as the wind'll take you. The *Weasel* and its cut-throat parson pirate will be there ahead of you, but save the *Hannah* and her cargo and crew at all cost, and sink anything that stands in the way of it."

"Leave it to me," said Captain Campbell, his eyes glowing as he stood up. "I have a score of my own to settle with this wooden-legged gentleman. He stole my father's best dingey once. I propose to return the *Weasel* as a substitute, with compound interest in tonnage!

"Good night, gentlemen."

CHAPTER VIII

THE ADMIRAL HOLDS COURT

AFTER William's departure from the Admiralty, David was in high favor with his father. In his anxiety to justify himself *to* himself upon a certainty of William's unworthiness, the Admiral willingly discovered much virtue in son David.

The reaction followed when there were no further great matters of little state to play with and when the financial specter came stalking around the hearth in the "cabin aft." Then, without in the least abating his bitterness against William, the Admiral began to estimate David.

"Damme!" said he to his kallibogus mug one night, "if David had choked over mathematics, things might ha' been different."

David saw the change and the peril to himself. At once he changed his tactics. One afternoon, many months after his adventure at Head Harbor Island—the truth of which had been carefully kept from the Admiral's ears—David made a general admission of his failures.

"I did my best, sir," said he, "especially in the sawmill-scheme; but when one is young and full of enthusiasm, one makes mistakes. When one realizes them and admits——"

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"Bilge!" interrupted the Admiral. "He is being generous to himself. He is declaring moral bankruptcy, committing temporary suicide, so he can unshoulder his responsibilities. Bilge, I say!"

David, unabashed, said an idea had just occurred to him.

"How much will it cost?" demanded the Admiral brutally.

"Don't misunderstand me, please," David begged. "It calls for no outlay. In fact, I plan a retrenchment scheme."

"Sounds well. Does it work?"

"For instance, the roads have been kept in repair mainly by your personal generosity, and the taxes have gone back into improvements for the people. Why not devote the taxes to running the Government?"

"Very good," said the Admiral. "I'm the Government."

"To all purposes," said David, the diplomat, "you having made the island habitable. Calling now upon the people to maintain it, with your income from rentals and so forth, you ought to be quite well-to-do."

"Mizzen and main!" growled the Admiral. "You'll have them *vote* next!"

"There's another thing," said David. "This Pauper Roll——"

"What's *he* been doing?"

"I fail to see why the Pauper Roll is maintained. He is suffering from nothing but laziness. I suggest that you keep the hundred dollars allowance and put Davie Lyon to work."

The Admiral was silent. For once David was right. The Pauper Roll could, and should, be abolished.

"Leave it to me," said he. "In the meantime this is the first Monday in the month. Is the docket ready?"

When David said it was, the Admiral screwed on his wooden-mallet fist and prepared to sit in judgment at the Coöperative Store.

The Store was crowded for the monthly session. The bench was the rum counter, draped with a Union Jack. Here the Admiral sat as a Magistrate but dispensed justice as a Court of final appeal. The Court procedure and ceremonies were, therefore, somewhat irregular.

It was ten o'clock in the forenoon when the Admiral appeared. Rows of barrels and boxes were vacated as the old gentleman, wearing his best uniform and followed by the quartermaster carrying the venerable brass telescope, marched to the bench. From the elevation of the rum counter the Admiral and Aaron Bunker saluted simultaneously. The salute was returned by all, standing. Then the Admiral struck the table with his wooden fist and the Court was formally declared open by the quartermaster, who shouted:

"Oyes! Oyes! Oyes! God save his Britannic Majesty's Admiral! Amen!"

"THE Admiral *versus* Patch, Lyon complainant!" cried the quartermaster.

This was an assault case, the victim being Davie Lyon. Marvin Patch had smitten the Pauper Roll with intent to do bodily injury. Davie voiced his complaint, adding that his health was bad and the blow had given him the "shakes" for thirteen hours.

"Hold on!" protested the prisoner. "That's goin' consid'rable far, your Admiralty. Do I look like a man who would 'ssault a pauper?"

"What do you plead, sir?"

"Guilty, your Adm'ralty, with powerful temptation," said Marvin.

"Well, damme!" roared the Judge, "any—"

His decision was never given, for at that moment the Coöperative Store was shaken by the roar of a cannon shot. The Admiral jumped to his feet at the familiar sound.

"What the devil——" he began, but the rest was lost in the excited babble of the crowd that poured out of the Coöperative.

"Admiral!" shouted one Luke Byron, pushing in against the outpouring mob. "The *Victory's* just weighed anchor an' 's fighting a schooner in the offing, an' Master David an' the quartermaster are at the guns!"

"Wh-wh-what! Wh-who!" gasped the Admiral.

"Here's something," added Luke, holding up a red-stained piece of paper. "Found it in the boat with the dead man. It's Ed Lank of the *Hannah*—shot dead!"

Wondering if his ears or his brains had gone wrong, the Admiral seized the paper. The red stains were of blood. On one side was written in a strange but scholarly hand:

To Wooden Shank:
You and your son may be smart, but here's my respects to you both. Pegleg Jones.

The Admiral almost staggered into the

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open. He broke through the crowd that was staring at the bay, and himself gaped at what he saw.

H. B. M. A. S. *Victory*, manned by two men, Aaron Bunker and David Sarvice, was under canvas and heading up Passamaquoddy Bay in pursuit of a schooner. Even as they stared, one of the *Victory's* swivels vomited smoke and fire and a ball. The schooner, a fair-sized craft, but crippled by a shot-away main and a damaged fore, was making headway and replying from a gun at her stern.

"Mizzen and main!" shouted the Admiral. "David's gone mad at last! That's an act of war!"

CHAPTER IX

THE BLOOD OF A SARVICE

IT WAS Betty Burleigh, sitting with David Sarvice in a window corner of the Store, who first saw the strange vessel.

"That schooner must have been in a storm or a fight!" she whispered excitedly to the scholar.

The vessel was under mizzensail and foresail. It was all she had sticks to carry. Her condition and the absence of men about her deck suggested that she was a prize—a smuggler, probably, being towed into Moose Island.

Just as David's eyes took in the schooner a puff of smoke appeared on her deck. Three figures were for a moment silhouetted against the sheet. One held up a pistol. A second threw up his arms and disappeared, while the third ran forward to the bows.

"There's killing being done there," said David. "Come out of this, Betty, and let's find out."

Outside the courtroom they encountered Aaron Bunker.

"A prize!" said the quartermaster, the moment he clapped eyes on the schooner.

He made use of the Admiral's telescope, which was the mace of Aaron's authority on Court days.

"Great sea-sarpint!" he growled. "Here's ugly doings. Turned on the prizemaster—killed him most like. Here! The Admiral's got to——"

He would have summoned his master, but David detained him. The expression on the scholar's face made Aaron raise the glass again.

"Howling hurricanes!" he gasped. "A fellow with a wooden leg's lowering a man overboard— Dead man! The prizemaster! Putting him in the boat—casting him adrift. Here! The Admiral——"

"Hold on!" said David, his blood strangely athrill. In that moment he thought he saw a chance of wiping out the Head Harbor Island incident, from which he had emerged so ingloriously in Betty's esteem and in his own conceit. "Don't interrupt the Court, Aaron. Hang the Court, anyway! Come with me—you, too, Betty!"

Next minute they were running toward the boat-landing. By the time Aaron brought his seventy-one years there, the scholar and Betty had already cast off the painter of the Admiral's dingey.

"Jump in, Aaron!" cried the scholar. "You steer. We'll row—to that drifting boat."

"She's only got one man in her—I mean the schooner," said Aaron, as the dingey shot out. "That's all I can see. He's got a wooden leg. No—there's another—another man, I mean. They can't handle her any too smart. Easy all. Here's the boat."

They ran alongside the drifting craft. In the bottom, lying in a heap, was the body of a man. The face was scorched and blood was trickling from a fresh bullet wound in the forehead.

"Heaven help us!" cried old Aaron. "It's Ed Lank, of the *Hannah!* Wife lives on the North Road. I know it's him, but how—— Here! The Admiral——"

It was David who arose to the occasion—not the scholar David, but a red-blooded man who would have been surprised himself at how he felt, had he thought of it for a moment. He drew the two small crafts together and stepped aboard the schooner's boat. As he turned over the dead man, a mocking, nasal voice suddenly hailed from the stern of the schooner. It was the wooden-legged man and he stood up with arms akimbo.

"The peg-legged parson!" gasped Aaron Bunker. "I knows him!"

David arose from the dead man's side. In his left hand he held two papers, one merely folded, the other almost covered with blood, but sealed.

"This is murder!" the scholar whispered tensely. "This is——"

He was reading the unsealed paper—the one Luke Byron presently brought to the

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Admiral. David's eyes blazed with indignation. The blood of a fighting family awoke from sleep. He shook the rag of paper at the figure on the schooner's quarter, then turned sharply to Betty.

"Here, girl!" he snapped. "This is no place for women. Into this boat—quickly."

Betty and David quickly changed places, he stepping back into the Admiral's dingey, she into the drifting boat. He thrust the paper into her hands. The sealed letter he put in his own pocket.

"Row that boat ashore," he commanded, "and give the paper to the Admiral."

"You're going to leave me in the boat with a dead man!" protested the woman in Betty.

"Do as you're told," said David, and turned upon Aaron. "Quartermaster," he commanded, like one to the manner born, "steer to the *Victory*."

"But Master David——" began Aaron, amazed.

"Obey me!" said the scholar sharply.

David himself bent to the oars and the dingey bore away from the floating coffin and Betty. She, left thus unpleasantly, paused not upon the order of getting ashore.

"Great sea-sarpint!" exclaimed Aaron Bunker, as he ran alongside his Britannic Majesty's Admiral's Sloop. "What are ye going to do?"

"Cast off the mooring, or whatever you call it," said David in peremptory tones. "Then get up the sails. I'll help pull the ropes. Hurry!"

"You would chase him, sir?" cried Aaron, his old face lighting up.

"Yes, sir!" the scholar almost shouted. "Chase him! Sink him! Capture him! Don't stand there gaping. I'm no milksop! Do as I say."

Aaron, staggered, bent all his energies to casting off. Presently the *Victory* was adrift. David, making a guess at what he knew nothing about, had the foresail up and was casting about for a means of making it fast. Aaron solved the problem with a turn of the hand.

When the mainsail was set the *Victory* gathered way. The light wind favored her more than the heavier, half crippled schooner, which, however, had gained considerably. She was a vessel of one hundred and fifty tons, against the *Victory's* thirty.

While they were pausing for breath, there came a cannon shot. A ball went through the sloop's mainsail and struck the sea astern. David laughed—a little hysterically.

"Are those guns loaded?" he asked, indicating the two swivels forward and the cohorns aft.

"Aye, aye, s'r—by the Admiral's orders, a month back."

"Show me how to fire them. Then you get up as many sails as you can. Put them all up!" he added, recklessly, gloriously ignorant.

Aaron, dazed at the metamorphosis of the scholar, procured a fuse from the cabin and showed David how to fire the guns. The scholar whipped off his coat and revealed a pair of girl-white arms. Then he took the tiller and looked ahead at the schooner which was now opposite Bald Head and half a mile in advance.

"Now," said he, when Aaron reported everything drawing, "at what distance will the guns do damage?"

"Quarter mile, s'r, for a true hard shot," was the reply.

"How far before my ball would strike the sea?"

"Lord, Master David! We don't shoot that way."

"Answer my question," said the scholar irritably.

"About—about half to three quarters of a mile, s'r," said Aaron, at a wild guess.

"Ye gods!" sighed the mathematician.

He yielded the tiller to Aaron, ran to the swivels in the bows and sighted one at the schooner. He fired the touch-hole and quickly stepped aside to mark the result. The ball whizzed past the fugitive and threw up a spout of water a quarter of a mile ahead of it.

TO THE quartermaster's amazement, David then began to make passes in the air with his hand. Presently the scholar sat down on the deck and scratched figures and arcs and angles on the planking with a pencil. Aaron was now as convinced as had been the Admiral that David was insane.

But David was only doing things according to his ideas. A senior wrangler in mathematics, he thought he could direct the destinies of so many pounds of iron hurled by a certain force at a certain angle.

Presently, after much reference to his figurings upon the deck, the scholar sighted

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the gun and fired. The shot passed aft and fore, six feet over the schooner's deck and to the left of her masts, tearing away gear that caused the damaged foremast to shake as in an earthquake.

"Well done, boy!" yelled the old quartermaster. "It's in your blood! Well done!"

"Perfectly simple," said David, coloring with pleasure. "Now, quartermaster, if you will load the guns again, I'll hold the sloop as she is going."

"He's going to fire again!" warned Aaron. "Starboard a little—starboard. Stea-dy!"

A ball of iron tore up the sea almost in the *Victory's* wash.

Less than a quarter of a mile separated the two vessels when the north end of Campobello Island was reached. To the right was Head Harbor Island and beyond that spread the Bay of Fundy, with the cliffs of Grand Manan looming up in the east. The wind had been freshening out of the west and the schooner, rounding the point, caught it favorably. Her mizzensail bellied and the sea churned under her forefoot.

Her name was plainly readable as it caught the sunlight—*Weasel.*

"But there's another sail there," cried the quartermaster suddenly. "Another schooner—privateer, by the looks of her."

David took a look at the third sail. She was a smart-looking vessel, smaller than the *Weasel,* perhaps, but more of a seaman at a glance. Her sails were snowy white and as she rode the Fundy swell her brasses caught and reflected the brilliant sunshine.

David suddenly rushed to the bows and knelt at the starboard swivel.

"The *Weasel* is gaining!" he cried. "I *won't* let her get away!"

Again he went through the business of figuring angles, distances and curves. Again he sighted and fired. The shot flew wild, whereat the amateur gunner sprang to his feet with a cry of exasperation.

"Steady her!" he yelled. "She's pitching horribly. Steady her somehow!"

A faint huzza traveled across the waters from the smart schooner.

"Great sea sarpint!" cried Aaron. "They're cheering us!"

"Steady her, I say!" the scholar almost shrieked.

A jib was set and the sloop rode more easily. But David's next shot had little more success. Again came a faint cheer from the stranger, this time nearer and clearer. The second schooner was bearing down upon pursued and pursuer.

"What d'ye suppose she's up to?" asked the quartermaster.

"I don't know and I don't care!" said David hotly. "If he tries to take my prize, I'll fight them both!"

"Howling hurricanes!" muttered Aaron. He could see the blood of the fighting Sarvices reddening David's cheekbones.

The second schooner presently wore ship. To the surprise of David and the quartermaster, and probably to the relief of the *Weasel's* peglegged commander, she then bore on a parallel course, which brought all three vessels heading toward the cliffs of Grand Manan.

Through the telescope David and Aaron Bunker studied the stranger. They could read her name—*Fairplay.* She was well armed and well manned, and her company seemed a spry, cheery lot. Once, to the wonder of the men on the *Victory,* they saw the wooden-legged marauder shake his fist at the commander of the *Fairplay.*

David turned the glass upon the master of the privateer—a tall, strong figure on the quarterdeck, leaning idly against a gun and with a glass under his arm. David fancied that so might his father have looked in his younger days.

When Grand Manan was but a mile off the breeze slackened and the sea became quieter. In the lighter air, too, the sloop slowly overhauled the *Weasel.* David, resisting the impulse no longer, went to the swivels.

It was both science and luck that he scored no miss this time. The ball struck the damaged fore, sending it in a tangle over the bowsprit. At the same time a mighty cheer burst from the privateer in the offing. David, elated, would have fired the second swivel, but the quartermaster dissuaded him.

"No, Master David. No, Captain!" he cried. "He's yours. He'll strike his colors. Don't sink him and ye'll have a cruiser for the Admiral's navy!"

"Splendid!" shouted David. "We'll——"

There came a roar from the *Weasel's* stern. The *Victory's* topmast fell like a broken wing across the mainsail, while the deck was showered with splinters that started the blood on David's face and on Aaron's hands and neck.

The incident stirred the remotest fighting

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spark in David Sarvice's veins. He rushed to the remaining swivel and, without much science, fired it. The shot struck the *Weasel's* gunwale with a mighty crash, but inflicting no great damage.

But it was enough for the Reverend Abiel Jones. The *Weasel* suddenly bore away toward the shore, the *Victory* pursuing and the *Fairplay* standing off and on with encouraging cheers.

"He's trapped himself on a lee shore!" cried the quartermaster. "Sarpints! He's launching a boat."

Pegleg Jones and his companion—a common sailor, he seemed through the glass—were making frantic efforts to lower a gig. They succeeded after difficulty. The sailor was the first to get in, the wooden-legged man urging his every action with the same pistol that killed Captain Lank.

"Don't let him go!" yelled David.

"Keep cool, Master David. Keep cool," the quartermaster cautioned. "You've captured a whole ship and that's only half a man."

Pegleg seemed to find his timber stay an inconvenience in getting aboard the gig. In the end he was forced to jump, with the alternative of being captured. He struck the bottom of the gig on both legs, and a sudden inability to sit down suggested an accident.

At the same time a roar of laughter went up from the *Fairplay's* deck. David flushed at the idea of laughter in this (to him) supreme moment.

"Great sea sarpint!" guffawed the quartermaster, who was examining the situation through the glass. "Wooden-leg's drove his peg through the bottom of the gig. If he don't keep it there he'll be *swamped!*"

Pegleg was keeping it there, however. Standing in a grotesque, angled attitude, his peg acting as a calk, he brandished the pistol in the face of the unwilling seaman and forced him to row toward the shore.

Ten minutes later Aaron Bunker held the *Victory's* dingey steady for the conquering scholar, who was about to board his prize.

"Master David," said the old quartermaster with much feeling, "I've seen your father board many a tall ship, and I'm thankful that I've lived to see a son of his do likewise."

And neither of them noticed that the *Fairplay* had put about and was standing on a tack for the open sea.

CHAPTER X

HIS HONOR OR HIS HONORS

NOTHING seriously disturbed the latent womanhood of Betty Burleigh until that morning when David Sarvice, haggard from fatigue and uncleansed of blood from splinter cuts, brought the *Weasel* to the Admiralty mooring.

Then human nature played a trick upon her. It was three months since she had seen William Sarvice. Immediately after his going away she thought much. She missed him greatly; not so much his actual presence as the unlikelihood of his presence should she wish for it.

When she learned that he was at Head Harbor Island and that he refused to take advantage of the proximity of Burleigh's Beach, she grew resentful.

Presently she was piqued at his slighting. It is a question whether her presence with David in the ill fated dory off Head Harbor Island was design to see William, or purely accidental. The accident that followed her presence in that dory, however, had left her heart in a turmoil.

She could not blame David for what had happened, but—— She had seen the two brothers as they were—in contrast. Her womanhood gloried in the strength, even what she had termed the beast brutality, of the man who had performed that herculean feat. Her maternal sense pitied David, and she comforted him with closer and more intimate gentleness. Yet she was the deep-sea lass and she sometimes felt that she despised David.

She planned to waylay William, to quarrel with him first and let the rest take care of itself. But when she heard that he had left Head Harbor Island and was cruising in parts unknown, she was both angry and unhappy. For a while she was sure that William was, always had been, and would be, essential to her.

Then good sense came to the rescue. William was the Admiral's son, she the "encroacher's" daughter. Her solid, home-made education was good enough for the time, the place and the manners—as good as William's any day, if not David's—but he was the Admiral's son, she the squatter's daughter. At best or worst, it could be but a flirtation between a daughter of the masses and a son of the classes.

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With her ideas adjusted, or readjusted, the deep-sea lass presently engaged with David in similar pastime—perhaps to assure herself that her viewpoint was correct. In Betty, the scholar found a person who (although ill bred, as he had decided in the beginning) had a mind that was original, independent and individual. In David, Betty found William's brother, with some of William's traits, but principally a very "superior" person.

This imagined "superiority" bred in her a passion to improve herself, and presently she found herself absorbing every pearl of wisdom that fell from David's lips; and she indeed learned much from him.

The intimacy ripened. Before David's superior reserve and polished exterior she discovered in herself the sex of which she had been unconscious while in William's company.

No more did she row a boat with athletic abandon—never since that day at Head Harbor Island. No more did she yell when excited. Her ways became quiet and her manners serene. She dressed like a woman nowadays, forswearing the streaming hair, knee-skirt and sea-boots for confining ribbons and buckled shoes.

But matters came to a pass on the morning when she discovered that David Sarvice had red blood in his veins. Now he ceased to be in her heart merely "William's brother."

It was following a night of anxiety on Campobello Island and at the Admiralty. When David and Aaron Bunker failed to return before dark, fear fell upon the Admiral and his people.

Burleigh's Beach had seen the two vessels pass—fighting. Persons who "happened to be" on Head Harbor Island reported the sloop and the schooner "hammering at one another" off the northern end of the island. When it was reported that the *Victory's* topmast had been shot away about sunset and that an American privateer had been seen to swoop down on both pursued and pursuer, it was conceded that David, in violating the neutral policy, had suffered disaster.

After so much excitement, suspense and despair, David's reception at Welchpool next morning was a hero's. The people crowded the shore to meet him, and cheer followed cheer. They had never liked David, but now——

"Chris'mus!" exclaimed Marvin Patch, who made a speech. "He's a *naval* progeny likewise!"

The Admiral came to meet his son, his face a hurricane of emotions that blew from every quarter. He relieved his feelings, or hid them, with a stream of incoherent, irrelevant profanity as he passed to the landing-stage. At first he pretended to ignore David, directing batteries of feigned ire at Aaron Bunker.

How dared the quartermaster go into action without him, or without his orders! How dared he! Damme, look at that topmast. The whole stick strained! And it was all an act of piracy! An act of war! A piece of high-handed blankety-blankedness! Then he ventured to look at the scholar.

"As for you!" Pride glowed in the old man's face. "As for you—shake hands, you idiot! Come up to the Admiralty this minute, sir! Your mother wants to see you—at once! *You!*" he suddenly roared, turning upon Marvin Patch and the Pauper Roll and the rest. "Standing by like a flock of sheep waiting to get their ears slit! Off with you!"

Betty, who had been standing on the outskirts of the crowd, did not move off with the others. Admiralty orders did not apply to the encroacher's daughter. She found herself standing alone. Her face reddened as she became aware that her hero-worshiping eyes were met by the exulting gaze of David.

All at once she turned away and, without understanding herself, fairly ran until she was out of his sight and he out of hers.

David's heart leaped. This was his day!

AT THE gate of the Admiralty there was a scream, muffled by the sob that was in it, and David found himself in maternal arms. Mrs. Sarvice was all but an emotional wreck, but for once the Admiral tolerated, even approved, her hysteria.

Half an hour later David closed the door of his bedroom and wearily dropped into a chair. A cheery fire was burning on a little hearth and the sheets of an inviting bed were turned down. He smiled into the fire and, with his hands dangling limply over the chair-arms, gave himself up to the enjoyment of the situation.

There were some things about it that he did not understand.

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How did that schooner come into Welchpool with every indication of having been in a naval action? That she was a prize was clear, but if the prize of Shackford's schooner, the *Hannah*, how came the *Hannah's* captain, Ed Lank, aboard her? Where was the *Hannah*, if not at the bottom of the sea? Who now commanded her?

In any event David realized the honor which he had brought upon himself in capturing, or recapturing, the *Weasel* and putting her rascally, wooden-legged commander to rout and isolation on a half barren island in the Bay of Fundy.

There might have been serious question of the right of David Sarvice, a British subject commanding a British vessel, to take possession of an American privateer, but against this Pegleg Jones and his *Weasel* stood a British charge of piracy and robbery—the charge of looting the English Captain's house at Beaver Harbor.

The capture was legitimate, but that did not solve the mysterious first part. Who had first engaged and captured the *Weasel?* How did Captain Lank of the *Hannah* come to be aboard as prizemaster? Where was the *Hannah?* And that schooner, *Fairplay*, at whose commander Pegleg shook his fist?

David presently stirred and moved a hand to a pocket of his coat. It had come to his memory in tracing the earliest incidents of the affair that there had been a sealed letter. From his pocket he now drew this letter. It was still sealed, but, its edges having been soaked with blood, it had frayed until the cover was all but dropping off. The superscription was completely obliterated by blood.

After a moment's thought David plucked away the tattered covering and glanced at the enclosed letter. Though stained here and there, it was still legible in every penned word. David at once turned to the end in order to find the name of the writer.

At once he started as if stabbed. The signature was—

William Sarvice

For a full minute David stared at his brother's name in his brother's familiar handwriting. Before yielding to the belief—the terror—that was creeping into his mind, he turned to the beginning of the letter:

Betty Lass:

This comes to you by the hand of Captain Lank, of the schooner *Hannah*, whom I have placed aboard the prize *Weasel* which I have captured and am sending to my father——

That was as much as David read. It was all that was needful to show that the *Weasel* had been his brother's prize. It was William's victory. He, David, had received honors which were, in good share at least, William's!

Hot resentment burned in the scholar's heart. His vanity was stung to the quick. A fury coursed in his blood, and he shut his teeth together in nervous chagrin.

Must he go to his father, to his mother, to Betty, to the whole island that was cheering in his honor and, confessing that most of the honor was William's, give back that which had been wholly bestowed upon himself? No! Why should he do so? Even if it had been William's prize, William had lost it again, and he, David, had recovered it. Of what value in honor or anything else was a prize not brought to port?

"It is my prize!" said David savagely. "And mine it shall remain—credit and all."

He paced up and down the room, the letter lying on the floor where he had hurled it in his exasperation. Presently curiosity, mingled with cunning and a desire to understand the situation better, seized him.

He stopped and looked down at the letter. He could learn, understand everything, only by reading that letter. It was another man's letter, even if his own brother's; and it was addressed to a woman—and that woman Betty Burleigh.

David uttered a polite curse and again paced the room. The reverie of temptation brought him up before the bedroom window. His eyes gazed blankly through the panes to where the North Road semi-circled behind the Admiralty, climbing Deer Point.

The scholar presently became conscious of a figure seated on a rock at the base of a tree by the roadside. It was a woman. Her elbows were propped on her knees and she was staring thoughtfully at the ground, with her chin in her hands.

It was Betty Burleigh.

David turned from the window, his heart beating anew with warmth and hope. He thought he understood.

It was a fall from the heights when his eyes again encountered the bloodstained letter on the floor. And it was to "Betty Lass" that the revelation of diverted honors

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was to be made, whether David spoke himself or let the letter speak.

When, and *if*, she read that letter, his pedestal would slip from under him. At least, it must diminish in the light cast by William's greater glory.

If only he had never found that letter! If only it had *all* been soaked with blood and beyond legibility of a single word! If only it—*did not exist!*

Had he known before he returned to the island, he would have been prepared—ready and glad, he assured himself—to give William the lion's share of the honors. But now——

He was still much in the dark as to the exact situation in which he found himself. How came William to be commanding a ship? How came Lank aboard William's ship? What was William's object in sending the prize to the Admiral? And the most trivial question seemed then the most important to David—what was the state of affairs between his brother, William, and the woman he addressed as "Betty Lass"?

David paced up and down again, his fingers twined behind his back and his teeth gnawing a bloodless underlip. It was a tug of war between his honor and his sense of self-preservation.

"It is justifiable," he told his conscience.

Yet as he dropped on one knee and his hand closed over the letter, his conscience shrieked utter protest. He dropped the other knee to the floor and covered his eyes with his right hand.

"What shall I do? What shall I do?" he almost moaned. "Keep my honors—or my honor?"

CHAPTER XI

THE LETTER

THE instinct of self-preservation won over the sense of personal honor. David read his brother's letter to Betty Burleigh.

At Sea, August 17th, 1808.

BETTY LASS:

This comes to you by the hand of Captain Lank, of the *Hannah*, whom I have placed aboard the prize, *Weasel*, which I have captured and am sending to my father. By its receipt he may know that his son is following in his own footsteps, if under another flag, and living up to the traditions of our family.

I am writing this late at night in my cabin aboard the privateer, *Fairplay*. It is my own ship, Betty.

It has been a hard, long day. I am tired, but not sleepy. I am filled, somehow, with the old boyish desire to share my adventure with you, if only in the telling.

My prize—my first prize, Betty—is in tow. Aboard her is Lank, whose house is on our own North Road, and a seaman, a Portlander named Tingley; also the person who brings you vividly to my thoughts tonight.

This is Abiel Jones, who was parson at Burleigh's Beach at the time you were born—the wooden-legged man my father placed in the stocks for "backsliding." After he left Campobello he turned freebooter.

I bought this ship out of money earned. I got together a crew, mostly from Moose Island, although a few of my lads are from Campobello. Among the latter is old Jack Pitch. Nowadays you would hardly recognize the drunkard of the beach in the sober gunner of my ship. Give him a gun to play with and he never touches rum.

About ten days ago I engaged in my first naval venture. A certain revenue-man on the American side grew over-officious and turned away Shackford's *Hannah*, commanded by Ed Lank, when she tried to enter Eastport, Moose Island. Not only that, but he sent the *Weasel*, commanded by Abiel Jones, to follow the *Hannah* and seize her if she attempted to land her cargo at a point where it might be easy to smuggle it over to the British side.

My commission was to protect the *Hannah* from the *Weasel*, which was acting upon no real authority and is known to be nothing better than a common pirate.

The *Weasel* had nearly two days' start of us. When we arrived at Castine, which is on Isle Haute, off the Maine coast, and whither the *Hannah* had gone, we found a high-handed state of affairs prevailing. The *Hannah* had had time to land her cargo of flour when the *Weasel* turned up. Jones immediately produced his "authority" from the Collector at Moose Island, and clapped Lank and his men in jail, after placing a seal upon the cargo which had been stored ashore.

The people of Castine were very angry about it, for they do a little business now and then, despite the embargo. In this case nobody but Jones had violated a law, for Castine is American. But they were afraid of Jones, knowing his reputation for lawlessness.

When I learned what was in the wind, I decided to play a trick. After making some arrangements with the town people, I openly put the *Fairplay* to sea again. I slipped back into port, however, soon after dark, and hove to. Presently boats came off the shore with muffled oars, and the *Hannah's* flour, deftly removed from the storehouse, was placed aboard my ship.

It was very nicely done, so far. The guards were town people, and readily shut their eyes.

My reasons for bringing the cargo aboard the *Fairplay* were two. First, the *Hannah* was being watched and several of Jones's men were in possession. Then, in the event of a fight, the *Hannah* would have been helpless against such an enemy, while the *Fairplay* was ready, and quite willing, to try odds with the wooden-legged gentleman.

Once the flour was on board, I left half my company aboard the *Fairplay* under my mate, Mr. McLaren, and myself led the other half ashore. We advanced quietly upon a house that had been converted into a temporary jail for the *Hannah's* crew. At pistol-point we demanded the keys of the guards,

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and in a very short time I had released Lank and his crew and added them to my own strength.

As we were returning to the boats the news spread that the jail had been broken. There was a great uproar among Jones's men, although the town people assured the privateer that the report was untrue. Even the jailers denied the release of the prisoners until Jones demanded that the prisoners be *produced*.

Then the truth came out. Jones and his men went aboard the *Weasel* and opened fire upon the *Hannah*. What Jones's own men aboard the *Hannah* said to this, I hope you will not try to imagine. When Jones found that he was firing upon his own men and that the *Hannah's* crew and cargo had completely vanished, he cast around to discover how he had been tricked.

All this took time, and it was graying in the east when the *Fairplay* got under way with her double company and the flour. Jones was not long in discovering the truth. He proceeded to give chase.

We had a good start of him and hoped to get clear away. Our object was not to rush into trouble, but to save the cargo. The *Weasel* is a larger vessel than the *Fairplay*, and she proved a slightly faster sailer.

Shortly after noon, when we were about ten miles south of Grand Manan, it became apparent that we must either fight or be captured. As I did not wish to fail in my first venture, and as my men were anxious to pay off the score against Jones, I decided to fight.

Then and there Jack Pitch proved the truth of his tales of gunning under John Paul Jones. We hove to. Jack Pitch—and you never saw a man so happy, yet so cool—trained a gun on the *Weasel*, which was less than a quarter of a mile astern and tacking to starboard, apparently under the belief that we had changed our course and trying to head us off.

Jack Pitch fired. The ball—the very first—struck the *Weasel's* main about ten feet above the deck. The stick, boom, canvas and cordage collapsed and went by the board!

"That about evens the sailing-match," said Pitch, saluting me with a funny doubling up of his long body.

We could have then sailed away, but the *Weasel* opened fire, and my men—especially Lank and his lads—were smarting to pay off the Reverend Captain Abiel Jones for good and all.

The *Fairplay* sustained little damage throughout the entire engagement. Jones may have been a desperate pirate himself, but his gunners were either drunk or fools. On the other hand, Pitch, our old reprobate of Campobello, proved a marvelous hand and eye. It seemed to me that he picked out the *Weasel's* soft spots and sent home a ball as if by the mere wish to hit where he did.

He did not attempt to sink the *Weasel*. His training with John Paul Jones seems to make him think of the enemy merely as a prize to be damaged as little as possible and only in such a manner as to make her temporarily unmanageable.

The *Fairplay*, not so fast as the *Weasel* under all sail, was smarter in maneuvering, or perhaps my men were better seamen. We buzzed around Wooden Leg just as I've seen a mosquito dance around the Admiral's bald spot when he falls asleep in his big chair over a mug of kallibogus.

It was my first engagement, but I do not think it was a great fight. We were only a superior company. The wooden-legged man struck his colors in an hour. That is to say, he flew no colors, but signified his surrender by frantically waving his arms and ordering his men to lower all the sails that were not shot away.

When we boarded the *Weasel*, the Rev. Mr. Jones was very polite, and offered to *apologize*. I told him that his apology was already taken and that we would now sail it into port as a prize. I am sorry to say he carried nothing as romantic as a sword, which I would like to have taken like a real Admiral and sent to you.

I have told Captain Lank to deliver this letter at the earliest opportunity. I hope you are happy, Betty. I am not—very; but everything will come right some day. WILLIAM SARVICE.

P. S. OFF CAMPOBELLO. NEXT MORNING. The wind is out of the southwest and the tide flooding. Lank says he can navigate the prize through the Narrows into the Bay, so you should receive this in a few hours. God bless you, Betty. W.

David Sarvice stared over the top of the last page at the fire on the hearth. His face was pallid with mental pain and heart chagrin.

Suddenly with a gasp of fury he pitched the letter into the blaze and raved at the thing as he did so. The flame caught one of the leaves and licked it up with a long tongue-sweep.

Upon the instant David came to a realization of what he was doing, what he had done. He sprang at the fire and tried to rescue the burning letter from its fierce, hot embrace. He succeeded in seizing one sheet, which was blazing as he threw it on the floor and stamped on it.

It was too late, however. All that he saved to his own conscience was a pathetic rag of scorched, brittle paper.

CHAPTER XII

LOVE AND WAR

WHERE William Sarvice was during the next three years, none knew as a certainty. Some said that Burleigh knew and that the big man and the Admiral's son were still in league toward the safe convoy of forbidden cargos. On the other hand it was reported that William was dead—killed in some dark encounter on the high seas.

The latter seemed the more likely solution of his continued absence and silence. Had he been alive, and had he heard of the death of his mother, he must surely have made a sign, if even in a letter to Betty. But Betty had never received a word from

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William Sarvice since that day when he placed her and David in the dory at Head Harbor Island.

Mrs. Sarvice's death occurred one day in 1811. She had always been a delicate, high-strung creature, easily reduced to collapse. David found her one Summer afternoon, sitting in her chair, dead. He summoned the Admiral, himself falling into a frenzy of grief. The old man stared at his dead wife.

"Damme, that's odd!" he blurted.

It was equally odd that the Admiral thereupon excoriated David for his tears, declaring it would be more seemly to summon the bos'n than pipe his eye over a sheer hulk. But when the Admiral himself left the room, the paradoxical old fellow blew his nose ponderously and, by way of conveying the tragic news to Aaron Bunker, flapped his empty sleeve in the direction of the flagstaff and gulped—

"Half mast, quartermaster."

If the old man took his wife's death greatly to heart, he never revealed the fact by word. Yet presently it became clear that something had struck a weak spot in his nature. He began to go downhill by visible stages.

Perhaps his wife's death was not the cause. He had heard a story. A British vessel had fallen upon a privateer—a common smuggler, they said. In the engagement the Captain of the privateer had been shot down. They also said—the authoritative but ever mysterious "they"—that the privateer's name was fictitious and that he was really the scapegrace son of a British Admiral.

Presently Aaron Bunker, whose years were equal to the Admiral's seventy-five, watched his master with an anxious eye. As the Autumn winds swept the island and the leaves rustled mournfully upon the lap of earth, the Admiral, regardless of weather, paced his "quarterdeck" with the air of a man who is looking for something. At intervals he would scan the sea through his glass.

Aaron thought he understood. The Admiral was breaking his heart of sheer loneliness. Mrs. Sarvice was gone. David was —"a good lad in his way, but——"

"Adm'ral," ventured Aaron one day, when his master had been standing for a long time looking wistfully at the Bay, "I don't think he's dead, s'r. He'll come back."

The Admiral slowly turned upon the quartermaster. He surveyed him with cold disapproval; then ostentatiously turned his back upon him.

"Sir — Admiral," said the old servant brokenly. "It's only me—Aaron Bunker—speaking to you, s'r."

The Admiral studied the American fort on Moose Island through his telescope.

"That boy, s'r, was like—like a son to me," said Aaron, with a stammering determination to say out. "Begging his own father's pard'n—I was his—his other father, s'r—so to speak——"

The telescope collapsed into itself with a brassy click. The Admiral turned upon the quartermaster.

"*Who* or *what* the devil are you whining about?" he demanded roughly.

"I ax pard'n again, s'r," said Aaron, with a humble dignity. "If ye don't know what I'm whining about, Adm'ral, it ain't for me to say any more."

Again the Admiral surveyed the American fort across the line. At last he spoke.

"Quartermaster," said he, facing Aaron with a smile. "I'll tell you a secret—a secret 'tis best you know."

"Aye, aye, s'r," said Aaron hopefully.

The Admiral glanced stealthily around; then, looking straight into the quartermaster's eyes, he *winked*.

"Aaron," he whispered, like a child conveying a piece of exciting information, "the United States has withdrawn its Minister from London!"

With that he went away into the house and closed the door of the "cabin aft" behind him. When Aaron came to report eight bells in the afternoon, he found his master huddled up in his big armchair before a dead fire.

"Meaning, of course," said quartermaster gently, "that there will be war."

The Admiral started. What was Aaron talking about? Ah, yes——

"War? . . . Yes, War! It has been coming ever since that cursed embargo. And mark me, quartermaster: This is the nearest British outpost to these benighted States, and we can't escape the brunt. But hear my oath, Aaron Bunker!" he added, rising to his feet and squaring his shoulders. "I'll defend my island to the last bucket of powder, or you may put '*Liar*' on my tombstone!"

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"He's breaking up—breaking up," muttered Aaron, as he retired to the pantry.

That war was inevitable between Great Britain and the United States was patent to the least intelligent observer. Already British war vessels were becoming thick in American waters.

Not infrequently the commanders of the cruisers dropped anchor in the strait and honored themselves by dining with Nelson's old Admiral. It was from one of those visitors that he first heard of the "son of a British Admiral" who was said to have been shot down as a smuggler.

"That's cruel hard on the British Admiral, I should say," said the old seafighter, passing his guest the mustard.

A later British guest, a corvette Captain, thoughtlessly said, as David took his seat at table—

"I was given to understand that you had two sons, sir."

"I had," said the Admiral bluntly. "The other one's dead!"

Which was "cruel hard" on the corvette Captain.

BY THE time of first snow it was apparent to everybody on the Island that the Admiral was, as Aaron put it, "breaking up." His moods were more variable and most of the time he was unapproachable, except through Aaron Bunker.

As time went on, the differences in rank and intelligence diminished between the two old men. It was pathetic to see them on the "quarterdeck," each in full uniform (but the uniforms, worn every day now, were becoming shabby and tarnished), the Admiral with his sleeve pinned up when he was not wearing the mallet, Aaron with the telescope, and each parading the "quarterdeck" in opposite directions, so that they met in the middle every minute and solemnly exchanged a salute.

Then the Admiral's "queerness" took a turn. He developed the idea that there was a conspiracy against him and his Island, that Great Britain was planning to cede it to the United States and that the Americans were designing a hostile invasion.

Discipline, as a result, began to take on a naval aspect around Welchpool and the Admiralty. By night and day the lookout was kept on the "quarterdeck." When the watches became too much for the old men, the Admiral called in the Pauper Roll. Davie Lyon was heartbroken until he found that in promenading he would be allowed to carry the Admiral's telescope and to wear a cast-off cocked hat. Then the Pauper Roll caught the war fever.

This fever was presently epidemic. The *Weasel* had been repaired and rechristened the *Goliath*—because David overcame it—and now the Admiral proceeded to man it. Captain Denny, skipper of the *Victory*, was made sailing-master. Marvin Patch, "always fond o' a bit o' gunnin'," was appointed gunner. David, in consideration of past prowess, was Captain, while the Admiral was, of course, the Admiral.

But David evinced only a faint interest. Since his mother's death he felt as desolate as the Admiral. The Admiral, too, was oil, David water; and they did not mix. The scholar gradually withdrew from militant affairs until his days might be said to have been divided between his books with Betty and his books without Betty.

The intimacy of Betty and David had been growing during those three years. After Mrs. Sarvice's death the scholar introduced the deep-sea lass to the Admiral. The old gentleman himself escorted her through the Admiralty and showed her his medals, his brass-dialed clock, his horse-pistols and his best cocked hat. Betty put on the cocked hat. The sight of her brown hair and sea-hued eyes stirred something deep in the Admiral. He suddenly forgot the encroacher and kissed the encroacher's daughter, and he told her to come again. She came. In the Admiral's presence she never breathed William's name and seldom in David's. Her mind and heart were embittered by one fact, that he (William) had left her cavalierly. He had never written a word or sent a message to her. He had not cared enough, apparently.

Late one afternoon when the snow was deep and the cold bluish tint of Winter twilight was upon the land, Betty and David, muffled in furs, walked from the Admiralty toward the Cove. That time Betty broke silence.

"David," she said suddenly, "is it not strange that he never wrote to any one—at any time?"

David was too startled to answer. They trudged along through the snow without a word. The gold of the west faded to a cloud-fleeced copper. The bluish tint deepened to an icy gray. Then said David—

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"You loved my brother, Betty?"

"Could a child love?" she asked softly.

"Possibly," said the scholar, "but not with a grown affection. One does not love permanently till one has ceased to grow."

"When shall I cease to grow?" she asked wistfully.

His steps became slower. Before she was aware of it he had fallen several paces behind. She turned in surprise and he noticed her face, rosy and soft amid the muffling furs.

"Betty," he said hoarsely, "we can not go any further—not like this. We are living a lie to each other—living a lie in the days of our youth. Don't you understand? I love you, Betty."

"O-oh!" she said, and half turned from him.

Her eyes sought the shore across the line of demarcation. An American schooner was beating up to windward. For a moment it brought to her—as did every strange sail—the thought of the sun-browned, golden-haired mate of her childhood. For a moment it seemed as if he were near her—before her. At his imagined presence, the something that William had hurt in her shrank from the cause of the wound.

By that momentary remembrance of her grievance, David won advantage. The arm that encircled her was not resisted. Over her right shoulder he pressed his cheek against hers.

"Speak to me, Betty," he whispered amid the silence of the snow. "Speak my name—just that!"

"David," said she listlessly.

He held her closer and kissed her cheek. She did not respond, only suffered it and withdrew from his arm. David also drew back, hurt by her iciness.

"What am I to understand?" he asked with sudden coolness.

His "superior" manner jarred upon her this time.

"What you choose. Only—don't kiss me," she replied, in her best Betty manner.

"I am afraid," said David reflectively, "that you either do not love me, or you are incapable as yet of a great love, or your affections are placed elsewhere."

"Please don't speak of me as if I were a machine out of order!" she said sharply.

"Betty," said he, supplicant lover again, "*can't* you love me?"

"I might—in time," said she, "if you would act less like—like the Pauper Roll."

So the affair hung fire. There were times when Betty relented and suffered her hand to be held, or her cheek to be kissed, but a second attempt to imprint a kiss upon her lips resulted in David's walking in the shadow of her displeasure for weeks.

WHEN the Summer came, however, Betty yielded. It was an evening in June, 1812. Afterward the scholar walked with her toward Burleigh's Cove.

He found big John smoking the everlasting pipe as he surveyed his growing garden. The younger man stated his case briefly and simply. John Burleigh surveyed him from head to foot. Then he turned his steady eyes upon his daughter.

"Look at me, lass," said he.

She did. Burleigh grunted.

"I'll see about it," said he.

That was all the satisfaction David got. But the politic squatter presently went into the house and began to indite a letter, setting forth the proposition and consulting the Admiral's attitude before committing himself to the Admiral's son.

Incidentally, the turn of events brought with it a little disappointment for John Burleigh. He had hoped all these years——

Well, what matter if Betty were satisfied?

But was she? Big John paused in his laborious task of penning a letter. He puffed his pipe. After all, the Admiral was the Admiral, and this son of his was a senior wrangler of Oxford. Burleigh shrugged his shoulders and finished the letter.

Yet he was sorry—in a way.

If the Admiral was furious about anything it was that David should have consulted Burleigh first. Big John's deferential diplomacy struck the old gentleman quite happily. Toward Betty, personally, his feelings were mostly kindly. Next day, David received a summons to the "cabin aft."

"Well," said the Admiral, without preamble, "so you propose to marry the encroacher's daughter."

"Sir," said David, inwardly shaking, "I—— That is to say I have yet to ask your consent and blessing and——"

"Bilge!" said the Admiral. "As for consent, it seems Burleigh's was all you needed, or asked for."

"It is customary, sir," said David, in the pedantic manner, "for a gentleman to ask

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the consent and approval of the lady's father, even where——"

"Bilge!" repeated the Admiral, but without ire. "The lady's father had more sense than my son. *He* asked *me!*"

He jerked his chin toward an opened letter upon the table. His face indicated that John Burleigh was in high favor and esteem.

"Well," he presently growled at David, "I never thought a son of mine would marry the daughter of a land thief. However——"

A cloud of reverie shadowed his face. Suddenly he turned a pair of glaring, challenging, defiant eyes upon David.

"I suppose," he thundered, "you are aware that your grandmother was no worse than she had a right to be?"

"I—— yes, I suppose so," said David, astounded.

"And that your grandfather slipped his cable on the way home to marry her?"

"You have—ah—never acquainted me with the full history," said the son tactfully.

"Yet I'm an Admiral and you're a senior wrangler and Burleigh's a confounded land thief—legitimately married, for I married him to Kitty Prendergast myself—and his daughter's worth all of us put together. Apply your mathematics to *that*, and what's the answer?"

David's face became bright with hope.

"The logical answer——" he began; bu the Admiral disliked logic just then.

"There's nothing logical in anything," said he, in the strange, reckless manner which marked his speech of late. "What's logical about a wench? Or wanting to marry one? Why, damme, your grandfather was logical to his keel and forefoot. *He* could figure sums in *Arabic!*"

"We were speaking, sir, of—Miss Burleigh," said David, somehow losing his father's drift.

"Miss Burleigh!" gasped the Admiral. "Who's she? Oh . . . You mean Betty. Mizzen and main! *Miss* Burleigh!"

He grumbled to himself for a few moments; then went on:

"A Burleigh will never enter my house. Marry *Miss* Burleigh, as you call her, and you can go live with the thieving encroacher and catch pollock to feed the little encroachers. No son of mine will bring a *Miss* Burleigh here. But Betty . . . Now, that's a breeze from another quarter. You were on the wrong tack, sir——"

There came a sharp tap on the door and Aaron Bunker entered unbidden. The Admiral snorted, but the quartermaster's old face was twitching with agitation, and his eyes were ablaze with excitement. His white hair seemed to stand on end as he threw at least forty years from his squared shoulders and stood at salute.

"Sir!" he shouted. "*I have the honor to report that the U-nited States has de-clared war upon Great Britain!*"

"Mizzen and main!" roared the Admiral, starting to his feet and rushing out of the house after Aaron Bunker.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HEART OF OAK

DAVID and his heart affair were pushed aside. The Admiral even forgot to reply to John Burleigh's letter, and the next communication he addressed to the encroacher was of war, not love.

The Admiral acted as if the entire responsibility of the international conflict devolved upon him. He doubled the "quarterdeck" watches, and set sentries upon the headlands all around his Island.

When the United States made no move to invade Campobello, the erratic old gentleman decided to make a hostile advance upon the United States!

Without the knowledge of David or any one else, he opened the campaign of aggression in the following letter to Captain John Shackford, "King of Moose Island:"

SIR:

The United States having considered it fit and proper to declare war upon Great Britain, I, William Fitzwilliam Sarvice, Admiral in his Britannic Majesty's Navy, do hereby call upon you to surrender Moose Island to me, on behalf of his Britannic Majesty, George III., by the Grace of God, King, etc., etc.

Your failure to unbend the rebel flag which now flies over the town of Eastport, the same being obnoxious to me and the King, and to substitute therefor the British colors, within twenty-four hours, will be the signal for more vigorous action by me toward the British investment of Moose Island and the said town of Eastport.

I am, Sir, etc., etc.,
WILLIAM FITZWILLIAM SARVICE,
Admiral, Royal Navy.

When this temerarious document had been despatched across the line, the Admiral

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issued orders for the general mobilization of his "navy." His people, ignorant of the Admiral's thought to reduce Eastport to smoking ruin, repaired aboard the *Goliath* and the little *Victory*. The war fever, nevertheless, was rampant among the old man's "subjects."

"Adm'ral," said Davie Lyon, as he left the watch, "this bein' a pauper ain't what it used to be. I wants to go to work and be a naval hero!"

"Then a hero you shall be, Davie!" cried the Admiral, pleased at such startling evidence of loyalty. "Repair at once aboard the *Goliath*. You are hereby gazetted powder-monkey—order in effect forthwith."

"Powder-monkey?" said Davie, his face falling. "Is that a *honorable* post, sir?"

"Honorable! Mizzen and main!"

And the Admiral launched into the history of Sir Cloudesley Shovel, who distinguished himself while a powder-monkey by swimming ashore with dispatches. The Pauper Roll departed happy.

While awaiting the reply from Moose Island, the Admiral was not idle. He wrote a letter to John Burleigh, acquainting him with his decision to storm Eastport if it did not surrender. He called upon the encroacher, as a loyal subject of King George, at least, to repair aboard his schooner *Katharine*, and drop anchor "forthwith and immediately" with the rest of "his Britannic Majesty's Admiral's Fleet" in Welchpool Bay.

Burleigh replied promptly:

SIR:

I have no sympathy with King George or any of his subjects in this war, and less with any man who contemplates turning a gun upon our neighbors over the river. Also, my schooner, the *Katharine*, starts on a fishing trip today, commanded by your humble servant, JOHN BURLEIGH.

While the Admiral was furiously raging over this note and threatening to sink the *Katharine*, fish, encroacher and all, the reply came from Eastport.

Captain John Shackford pointed out very gently that the only American flag flying on Moose Island was within the walls of Fort Sullivan, to the commander of which Admiral Sarvice had better address his ultimatum. Shackford also said it was not at all clear to him that, in the event of the Admiral's bombarding the town, he would not be firing upon British subjects upon British soil, the Treaty of 1783 claiming Moose Island as within the British line!

The matter of the "obnoxious" flag the old Continental soldier could hardly overlook, but he admitted that he would not be in the least surprised if the flag was "obnoxious" to his Majesty.

But—perhaps to take the sting out of that—John Shackford took the Admiral to his heart. He begged to remind him that they were both old men, each occupying a similar position among the islanders, and he *hoped* the Admiral would *see his way* to preserve mutual good feeling and leave this quarrel to the politicians who began it.

The tone of the letter pleased the Admiral, flattered him. He presently abandoned his first sanguinary scheme, blaming his change of heart, not upon anything Shackford had said—dear, no—but upon the treachery of that fish-brained, etcetera'd encroacher!

"You!" he snorted, catching sight of David. "You would marry *Miss* Burleigh, would you? Damme, I'll see you tarred, feathered, keel-hauled and swung to a yardarm first!"

So for a time stood the love affair.

So, also, did the War proceed without the Admiral's assistance or interference. But he was not idle. His war blood had to be satisfied somehow. He himself presently commanded the cruises of the *Goliath*, with the little *Victory* in her wake.

Now, the name of Sarvice stood for high efficiency in naval circles. It was no crack-brained eccentric who bellowed commands from the quarterdeck of the *Goliath*, and taught his heterogeneous company, including David, the arts of maneuvering and of planting a shot at the right moment and in the right place. The Campobello cliffs on the Fundy side suffered much; but what matter? The Admiral was afloat again!

AS NEWS of the war traveled to Campobello a new anxiety descended upon the Admiral.

"Accidents will happen," was how he labeled the sinking of the British *Guerrière* by the *Constitution*. When the *Macedonian* was captured by the frigate *United States*, a frown gathered on his brow and he took to pacing the "quarterdeck" on the lawn and muttering fiercely in the "cabin aft." Then one day he fairly exploded.

"Mizzen and main!" he roared at Aaron Bunker. "What has happened to the

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British navy? Hear ye this, quartermaster!"

The *Wasp*, a United States sloop, had captured the British sloop, *Frolic*, after a fierce engagement carried on in a heavy gale. The seas were so terrific that often the muzzles of the guns were submerged. It was a long, hard fight, but in the end the British sloop struck her colors to the *Wasp*.

What set the Admiral literally dancing mad was the report that when the *Wasp's* men boarded the *Frolic*, there were only four men on the deck, the rest having gone below to escape the *Wasp's* scathing fire.

"Ducked under fire! Ye gods!" bellowed the Admiral, like a bull in pain. "Tell me, quartermaster, did ye ever hear the like in *our* day?"

It was a disastrous year for the British Navy in American waters, and it bore hard upon the proud old fighter's spirit. The next year, 1813, seemed no better. About the time the *Constitution* took the *Java*, the Admiral had a guest to dinner. To Lieutenant Blyth of the British *Boxer*, the Admiral spoke of the worm that was gnawing at his pride.

"I tell ye, our sea dogs are becoming mongrels. I'd forgive 'em if they'd bite, but damme, they only bark!"

"Wait, Admiral!" said Blyth, smiling.

When, toward the end of September, the Admiral heard that Blyth had encountered Burrows of the American *Enterprise*, that the *Boxer* was captured and her commander dead, the fact that Burrows also had fallen in the fight helped the old gentleman none.

He went into the big "messroom" of the Admiralty and stared at the chair where Blyth had sat smiling at his patriotic despair. Before the eyes of Aaron Bunker and David, he burst into tears.

Attempts to console him resulted in the scholar and the quartermaster being pursued from the house by a hurricane, which roared—

"Damme, do I need a wet nurse!"

Next day the Admiral piped all hands to quarters on his flagship. He scoured the bay in search of a United States war vessel big enough to be worthy the *Goliath's* prowess. He cruised every day for a week, but found no victim.

Then one day three British frigates sailed into Passamaquoddy Bay and dropped anchor off Indian Island. This island is about one mile northwest of Campobello and half that distance north of Moose Island.

The *Goliath* happened along, making for the Admiralty anchorage. Through his speaking-trumpet the Admiral hailed the largest of the frigates.

"Ahoy!" he roared. "Don't ye know better than to drop anchor there? Ye'll be high and dry before morning."

The commander of the largest frigate, Rear Admiral Colchester, covered his ignorance of Fundy tides by replying—

"When we need any local talent to take command, we will send you the first invitation."

"Sir!" thundered the Admiral. "You are addressing Admiral William Fitzwilliam Sarvice, of his Britannic Majesty's Royal Navy Reserve!"

There was silence aboard the frigates. Before a suitable reparation could be tendered, the *Goliath* was out of earshot.

Next morning Aaron Bunker had "the honor to report" that the three British frigates were aground on Indian Island.

"There!" said the Admiral. "Rear Admiral What's-His-Name feels as small as a whelk this fine morning. Hand me the glass, quartermaster. They'll get off in a few hours, but——"

"Mizzen and main!" he broke off. "What's that, Aaron?"

Aaron took the glass and leveled it as directed by the Admiral.

"Am I going blind or mad, quartermaster?"

"Great sea sarpint!" cried Aaron. "That's an American war vessel, sir—a bark crammed with men and armed from bowsprit to starnpost. Howling hurricanes! Must ha' come through the Narrows from the open sea."

"Narrows, ye blockhead!" snorted the Admiral. "It's low tide. He couldn't come through the Narrows. He's been hiding behind Moose Island—hiding from *me!* Now he's making to escape, but by the eternal——"

"No, s'r! Hold on, s'r!" cried Aaron Bunker, excitedly. "It's the frigates he's arter. Bearin' down on 'em under full sail an' the men a standin' to the guns!"

"What! Going to destroy 'em where they lie!" shouted the Admiral, seizing the telescope. "Coward! No—not coward! Sarves 'em right! His business is to destroy!"

A terrific roar, like a clap of thunder followed by reverberations, rolled across the bay. The American bark, sailing as close

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in as she dared, had discharged her larboard broadside full into the frigates, which were lying close together, their bows pointing landward.

Almost immediately the American went about to starboard and, taking advantage of the northeast wind, came back in a few minutes with her other broadside.

"Quartermaster!" said the Admiral, clicking the brass telescope into itself and turning with a certain acute calmness. "That fellow means to reduce all three to matchwood before the tide can take them off.

"*But*—" and the old fighter's eyes burned fiercely—"he has still to reckon, not with popinjays in brass buttons and white hose, but with hearts of oak and a British Admiral of the old school!"

His voice suddenly boomed out with a virility and bell-like timbre that Aaron Bunker recognized as from the throat of the Admiral of old:

"Quartermaster! Pipe all hands to quarters and clear for action!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE ADMIRAL IN ACTION

THE moment the *Goliath* was under way, with all her sails spread to the northeast wind, the change in the Admiral was remarkable. None understood it save Aaron Bunker, who had seen his master under similar circumstances before.

Gone were his irritability, his explosiveness, his pompous bearing. His eyes were afire with the old bellicose spirit; but there was a quiet about the man and his manner which added to his dignity and detracted nothing from his strength, suggesting as it did great latent force and capability.

To the men he uttered little more than a supplement to the orders which he had issued through David as Captain, or Denny as sailing-master, or sent along the deck by the quartermaster.

Most of the time he stood by the larboard quarter, his underlip protruding dourly, his brows knitted and his eyes fixed glassily upon the enterprising bark which was still pounding the stranded frigates.

The Britons were in a bad situation. Lying as they did almost parallel with each other, their broadside guns were worse than useless. To fire them meant to riddle themselves. They were practically helpless against the attacking bark which suffered small damage from the stern-chasers of the frigates. Added to the confusion aboard the grounded vessels, most of the officers had spent the night ashore and had elected to remain in jovial company during the day, or at least until the tide floated their vessels.

Even while the American privateer was pounding the vessels, the officers began to appear from all directions—some in rowboats from Eastport, some in carriages, or on horseback, or running afoot along rough roads and across green fields.

Presently order was restored aboard the ships. The firing became more regular from the stern chasers, and other guns were brought into advantageous position. The bark now drew off from shots which, while doing no serious damage, had cut her rigging unmercifully and wounded two men.

At the same time the Admiral discovered himself and his vessel under survey by both attacked and attacker. He grunted and turned to Quartermaster Bunker.

"British ensign," said he, jerking his chin aloft, "and Admiral's pennant."

At sight of that combination of powerful suggestion, a cheer came from the stranded frigates and dismay appeared aboard the bark; how deep that dismay, the Admiral was yet to understand.

At this chance to score revenge, the commanders of the frigates simultaneously gave orders for the lowering of boats. It was an odd spectacle, the boats in some cases striking dry land, the armed men dropping into their places, only to be routed out by their officers and commanded to rush the boats into the sea.

"Believe me, sir," cried Captain David, in whom the fighting blood was again stirring, "they will cheat us of our prize."

"Hrrmmmph!" growled the Admiral. "They might as well stay aboard and clear wreckage. He's no fool!"

He was the American privateer.

Foreseeing, unless he made sail, an engagement with the *Goliath* and the water alive with boatloads of boarders from the shore, the bark's commander hastened to be upon the best possible course consistent with the wind and the enemy's position.

To escape to the open sea through the Narrows at the south of the bay was out of the question. The Narrows were impassable at low tide, and the privateer dared not engage the forces that were now between

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him and the southern outlet of Passamaquoddy Bay.

Behind and above Moose Island was a greater piece of insular land—Deer Island. The channel to the right of it, between it and Campobello, lay north by east, almost in the teeth of the wind. Escape that way might be effected, for the same adverse wind would hinder the *Goliath;* but wind would not prevent the boats following and the triple crews boarding.

There was only one other course and it was the best.

To the west of Deer Island a great channel ran northwest with the Maine shore and into the widest waters of Passamaquoddy Bay, north of Deer Island. Once a point far enough north was reached, the wind, if it held from the same quarter, would be fair for a race to the southeast. Good seamanship would then be all that was necessary to take the plucky bark through a maze of little islands into the open Bay of Fundy and the ocean south of it.

The commander of the privateer had made his decision at once. Already he was taking advantage of the wind on his starboard beam and was slanting away up the northwest passage. The bark was a better sailer than the *Goliath*, but it was a staggering shock to the Admiral's crew that he made no attempt to follow. It was a blow also to the infuriated commanders of the frigates. While the Admiral stood off and on in apparent indecision, or sudden weakness of spine, a hot volley of uncomplimentary opinions was hurled from the decks of the British men-o'-war.

"Why, sir!" stormed Rear Admiral Colchester. "Is this the prowess I hear you brag of? Were she twice as big and thrice as fast, any common British seaman would pursue until the last thread of canvas burst!"

"Sir!" replied the Admiral. "I will admit that I am no common British seaman. Were I not a disciplinarian myself, I would classify your rating in the hearing of your entire ships' company."

Much more of this distressing give and take followed. It was painful and astonishing to David, who was partial to volubility in himself, but deplored it in others.

It shocked old Aaron Bunker, who had been inwardly rejoicing at his master's return to his "quarterdeck manner," that the Admiral should be enjoying this harangue and even encouraging its continuance.

In the meantime, the American bark was careering onward, unscathedly joyous!

"But my dear sir—Admiral!" David protested. "This is childish. This is unlike you, sir, and——"

The Admiral gave a quick glance at the escaping bark; then turned upon the scholar a rusted, wrought-iron face that was illumined by some sort of joy. He was fresh from delivering a cleverly worded piece of satire at the expense of the rising naval generation.

"You simpering seminary siss!" said he to David. "They know no more about strategy than I do about mathematics!"

Which David construed as personal.

BY THE time the privateer had disappeared around a bend of the Northwest Channel between Deer Island and the Maine shore, the battle of naval estimates came to an end. Rather, the Admiral, who had seemed the eagerer to continue, suddenly ended it by wearing ship and standing away up the bay, hugging the *outer* side of Deer Island and taking every possible advantage of the ill wind.

The British commanders, who had foregathered aboard Colchester's frigate, the *Juno*, to repair their ruffled plumage with mutual vindication, cast wrothy glances after the *Goliath*. They were still explaining to each other and figuratively shaking fists at the departing Admiral, when the schooner was seen to go about on a tack that would carry it past Head Harbor Island and into the open Bay of Fundy.

"Now the old fool is off on a Quixotic cruise!" said Captain Brand of the *Ulysses*.

"Lear going to howl at the sea!" quoth Captain Mountjoy of the *Achilles*.

"Unless—of course——" mused the Rear Admiral.

Colchester had been lost in thought for a little while.

"You see," he added presently, "Deer Island *is* an island, after all. At least, I should presume it is. In that case, there must be a second outlet from the upper bay."

"An island being a body entirely surrounded——" began Captain Brand with an attempt at jocularity.

But the Rear Admiral scowled at him, and again fell into a thoughtful gravity.

"Is it possible, do you suppose——" Colchester presently resumed. For the third

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time he fell to musing. But suddenly he looked up sharply.

"By Heaven!" he cried. "I believe we malign the old gamecock. Look here! He knows these waters. We don't, gentlemen, and it is no use to deceive ourselves on that point. Let's be fair and dispassionate. Come into the chartroom for a minute."

Presently the commanders were poring over a chart of Passamaquoddy Bay and the waters from the mouth of the St. Croix River to the Narrows at Lubec Point, Maine. It was a great expanse of water, dotted by hundreds of islands and hedged off from its mother, the Bay of Fundy, by a string of large islands running north and south—Moose Island, Campobello, Deer Island and Indian.

Rear Admiral Colchester stared hard at the chart, as he already had done that morning. This time he did not look at the soundings off Deer Island, but swept the channel to the northwest, which the privateer had taken, and the channel to the east of Deer Island, where the Admiral was now battling a head wind.

"It is a veritable *cul de sac*," exclaimed Captain Brand, "hemmed in by Canada—here!" And he touched the land encircling the entire bay, north, west and east. "He could have followed the Yankee and engaged him somewhere in there, and we could have been afloat and to his assistance before——"

"No, no!" interrupted Colchester warmly. "Let us be fair. That man is a strategist. I retract everything. Look here!"

He pointed to the right of the apparent *cul de sac* of the Upper Bay, where there appeared a chain of little islands. They seemed at one time to have joined the north end of Deer Island with the encircling Canadian mainland.

There were a number of small channels piercing through this group, all that made Deer Island an insular body. Through these channels small craft might pass, but only one through which a large vessel might sail, and then only with a favorable tide.

It was marked La Tête Passage.

"There!" said Colchester, his finger on the almost invisible outlet. "Our American friend can not remain in the Bay after leaving us so thoroughly informed of his presence there. He must come out, and it must be through this little passage. Admiral Sarvice is tacking up the eastern channel to meet and lay across the Yankee the moment he comes through!"

"Take my word for it, gentlemen!" Colchester went on, almost with enthusiasm. "That hot old rascal was wasting time for a purpose when he stood off and on there with the speaking-trumpet. He was actually encouraging the American *to escape the way he was going!* And if——

"Ye gods and graces!" he broke off, like one shocked out of all connection with his own speech.

His finger had moved abruptly to an imprint in the lower right corner of the chart of Passamaquoddy Bay. Captain Mountjoy and Captain Brand looked where Colchester pointed. Then all three commanders turned to each other with faces upon which was a commingling of chagrin and a desire to shriek with laughter.

The chart confessed in delicate copperplate, and with many a flourish, that it was compiled for the Lords of Admiralty from actual hydrographic survey in the year 1770, by *Captain William Fitzwilliam Sarvice, R. N.*

IT WAS about half past two o'clock in the afternoon of that memorable day in 1813 when the *Goliath* hove to in the lee of a patch of rock, blueberry and woods called Adam's Island. The island lay less than two miles north of Head Harbor.

It had been a tedious battle against headwind, but the Admiral had commanded a distant view of La Tête most of the time. Now, as he hid his vessel behind the spruce-clad islet, he knew he had only to wait and watch.

"You may drop anchor, Mr. Denny," said he to the sailing-master.

While the order was being executed, the Admiral summoned Aaron Bunker to his side. The seventy-seven-year-old Admiral looked at his seventy-seven-year-old quartermaster with something like real fraternal affection.

"Aaron, m'lad," said he, "this is *our* fight—our last, most likely. It is a little matter of personal pride, this—yours and mine, you old salthorse. Young jackanapes against old fighters—hey? Very well!"

Aaron nodded, but it was clear that he was afraid for his master's mind.

"Very well," the Admiral repeated.

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"He'll have to come through there—La Tête. You hear me? Very well! We're ready for him, and pray Heaven he comes through before dark, for I've got to fight, Aaron Bunker! You hear me?"

His voice dropped to a tense whisper.

"*I've got to fight!*"

"Aye, aye, s'r!" said Aaron, something young leaping in his old heart.

"Now, then," continued the Admiral, his manner stiff and formal once more, "you will take a couple of keen-eyed lads—Silas, there, and young Mitchell—and go ashore on the Island here. Shinny them up the tallest spruces and tell 'em you'll pick 'em off like partridges if they don't keep their eyes spliced on that passage.

"Let them report to you the second they see his tops'l and, at the word, you come to the edge of the woods and *take off your hat!* Lively now!"

Aaron Bunker and his two keen-eyed lads went ashore. The Admiral quietly summoned Captain David, explained the maneuvers and ordered him clear the ship for action.

"No grog until the signal," were his final instructions. "No cheering. All quiet and lively. And now I'm going below to snatch forty winks. Call me at the word from the quartermaster."

He left the deck and was presently snoring loudly in his cabin. At a few minutes after four o'clock there came a sharp rapping on the door.

"Have the honor to report, sir," said Davie Lyon, powder-monkey, "that the privyteer has showed up a-comin' through La Tête!"

"Coming out she is, then," said the Admiral, getting up with ponderous deliberateness. "Tell Captain Denny to weigh anchor at once and make all sail."

"And, Davie," he added, as the Pauper Roll saluted. "Remember Sir Cloudesley Shovel. Ye may be a hero—or an angel—before nightfall!"

CHAPTER XV

HIS OWN FATHER

WILLIAM SARVICE, better known in the United States naval employ as Captain William Campbell, conned the bark *Wild Duck* through La Tête Passage.

"Larboard—larboard—steady!" he intoned, while the man at the wheel obeyed like an automaton.

"By the lead—*five!*" droned the man in the chains.

William waved his hand in air and slightly to starboard. The quartermaster, whose eyes never left the pilot, gave her a spoke. Presently the monotonous drone came again from the leadsman.

"*Fo-o-our!*"

To right and left of the *Wild Duck* the land closed in, precipitous bluffs sheathed in Summer gold and Autumn russet. On each side of the vessel, and ahead, the waters of the Passage were broken by shallows, reef-ripples and projecting rock-points. And the sea changed hue according to the ever changing depth.

"By the lead—*three!*" wailed the man in the chains.

The piloting Captain's eyes looked dead ahead. His lids hardly flickered as he traced the thread of black, unbroken water which was the only passage at that tide.

Presently the water changed to a transparent green. From the elevation of the quarterdeck one could see the weed-mossed rocks at the bottom, and the little golden-bellied rock-cod darting away from the looming shadow of the ship overhead. Then the transparent green abruptly changed to velvety black.

"*Sev-en!*" cried the leadsman with a cheerier note.

The pilot's hand moved once more and he uttered a single word. The wheel creaked and the bark's prow swung slightly. Two minutes later Captain Campbell relaxed his rigid attitude and turned to the quartermaster at the wheel.

"That's all," said the commander. "Head her sou'west and hold her at that. It's open water to the sea."

"Wind's dropping, sir," said the lieutenant, McLaren. "Time we were out of that."

"We're out," said William.

There was a cloud on his face. He barely heard McLaren and merely echoed him.

His mind was back off Indian Island, and there lingered the sick sensation that had crawled upon his heart when he saw that schooner putting out from Campobello—the schooner to avoid which he had lain hidden behind Moose Island for a week.

He knew her commander, as did one other man aboard the *Wild Duck*—the gunner, Jack Pitch. The "pirate" must

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have recognized the old *Weasel*, despite her new name.

William shook inwardly at the thought of what he had escaped—not the battle, for he knew that Pitch could have sunk the *Goliath*, but at the mere possibility of being forced into firing a gun upon his own people, his own father!

An hour more and not even he, familiar with these waters, could have dared La Tête in darkness and ebbing tide. In that case he would have been compelled to beat about the Upper Bay for perhaps sixteen hours—at least, until he had a fair tide and a fair wind in conjunction.

But the *Wild Duck* had won through. That was the great achievement, for William had no doubt that the frigates were afloat again and hoping to entrap him in the blind alley of the Upper Bay, from which he had just escaped.

One thing seemed certain. His enemies would not dare La Tête at any tide, especially after their experience off Indian Island. Less probable was it that they could have come up the eastern side of Deer Island to head him off, for at full tide and all through the afternoon the northeast wind had still been blowing hard.

True, they might pass out through the Narrows at Lubec, running before the wind and with a pilot, hoping to head him off in the open sea. William smiled. Given sea room he would outmaneuver, if he did not outsail, their smartest cruiser.

He knew his native tides; he knew the eccentricities of his native winds; he knew the currents; he knew the very "color of the water" when the fog was thick as wool.

As for his father—— Yes, the Admiral could have made it; but he thought it hardly likely that his father had done so. He had observed the tactics of the *Goliath* and had witnessed the battle of naval estimates.

Poor old Admiral! He had seemed very pathetic then to a son in the full flush of capable manhood.

But perhaps the Admiral had recognized him through the glass. The old man's heart must have recoiled from the possibility of unnatural clash. The Admiral must have discreetly allowed him to go his own way. The Admiral must have deliberately covered his retreat by arguing with the——

"Sail on the starboard bow, sir!" hailed a voice forward.

"Ha!" exclaimed Lieutenant McLaren. "Here's our friend of the speaking-trumpet again! He must have beat up the eastern passage. Didn't think he had it in him. He's——"

The lieutenant stopped abruptly and looked at his commander.

Captain Campbell's face was very white, and he was gripping the starboard gunwale. His eyes seemed fascinated by the sight of that schooner which was appearing from behind Adam's Island and making to head off the *Wild Duck*.

"What are your orders, sir?" asked McLaren, a little impatiently.

William made no reply; only stared—stared!

"She's a fair prize and I'll warrant there's nothing behind her," McLaren went on suggestively. "The frigates could not possibly have reached up here yet. She's ours, sir. Clear for action?"

William started at the familiar, blood-stirring phrase.

"No," said he slowly. "No."

McLaren shrugged his shoulders. William roused himself, fairly dragging his eyes from the *Goliath*.

"Well—yes," he said. "You may clear for action, Mr. McLaren—as a precaution. But first crack on every rag there's room for and try to run past that schooner. We won't engage her, Mr. McLaren."

"Won't fight?" echoed McLaren incredulously.

"That, in effect, is what I said!"

William spoke a little sharply.

"It may be a ruse to hold us. Do you not see the wind is dropping? We'll be becalmed in a very short while."

"All the more reason——"

"Don't argue with me, Mr. McLaren!"

"I did not mean to, sir," said the lieutenant, saluting stiffly.

"DAMME, he's a coward after all!" snorted the Admiral who had been watching the *Wild Duck's* movements as his own vessel crept up to waylay the other's escape. "She'll make a run for it, but I'll lay across him yet. Bear a point to south'ard, quartermaster, and don't let her slip by. Captain Sarvice! Have Gunner Patch stand by the bow chaser and drop a shot the moment she's in range. Run with her at close quarters, Mr. Denny, and we'll give him our larboard broadside."

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There was a chorus of "Aye, aye, sir!" as the officers and men of the *Goliath* bustled to their business.

William Sarvice's agitation increased as he saw the Admiral's maneuvering. It was clear now that if he did not outsail the *Goliath* and cross her bows without suffering a shot, he must either fight or receive in silence that which his heart and mind revolted against repaying.

His own decks were cleared for action, and the dropping breeze seemed to decree the conflict. The men at the guns perceived this and were pleased accordingly. But the Captain's peculiar indecision and the order to make sail had awakened wonder and uneasiness forward. The men were whispering. Eyes glanced at the figure of the commander on the quarterdeck.

William was restlessly pacing up and down, ever glancing from the water to the canvas, then at the weather quarter, and again at the *Goliath* and the diminishing distance between it and the *Wild Duck*. In the agony of his heart and mind he glanced around the sea, like a hunted thing seeking a way of escape.

Behind was La Tête, wind and current forbidding retreat the way he had come. Close in to starboard was the eastern side of Deer Island with an outer fringe of islets that ranged from wooded bluffs to mere breaks in the sea's skin. Due south was Head Harbor and Campobello.

The southwest course that he was sailing was the only possible escape; and there was the *Goliath* making to head him off!

A little buzz of talk arose from the men in the waist. William's eyes followed the many that were suddenly turned upon the *Goliath*.

Even as he looked, there came a jet of smoke from the schooner. A ball from the Admiral's bow-chaser struck the sea with an explosive splash. At the same time the *Goliath*, which had been sailing close up in the dying breeze, eased off and exposed her larboard.

"Shall I give the order to fire, sir?" cried Lieutenant McLaren.

"No," said William stonily. "Whistle for a breeze."

It seemed as if the wind heard and in proverbial fickleness died out altogether. The *Goliath* was now lying a parallel course. Presently the very affinity of drifting matter appeared to be drawing the two vessels closer together.

William's brow was glistening with sweat. He found himself noting the oily swell that lingers between the dropped breeze and the dead calm. Over his right shoulder the sun was descending behind Deer Island in a great riot of color.

"Send Gunner Pitch aft," said he huskily.

The word was passed along the deck. Jack Pitch, hitching his long body together, ambled to the commander's side.

A murmur of enthusiasm swept the ship. The Captain had summoned the crack gunner, the John Paul Jones man. Now there would be a ship either deftly disabled, or, if too powerful to be taken as a prize, as deftly sunk.

"Pitch," said William in an undertone, "you know that schooner. With your own eyes you see the man who commands her. You knew him. You knew me—in the old days. Can a man fire upon his own father?"

"Didn't he come arter you?" said the "pirate." "You don't want to fight, but he does. Then fight, says I!"

"It's easy saying," said William ruefully. "He put you in the stocks once."

"Plague take ye!" exclaimed the privileged gunner. "Didn't John Paul Jones plan to rake the Solway an' rejuce his native town? It's war an'——"

"That'll do, Pitch," said William, sorry that he had sought advice in a prejudiced quarter, which might yet have held sympathy. "Get back to your station, and——

"Look here!" he broke off in an agonized manner. "I may have to fight, but if he fires again and forces me, for Heaven's sake *don't sight a gun yourself!* Let Kilby, your mate——"

His words were drowned in a roar that shattered the silences of the calm sunset. The *Goliath* was wreathed in smoke. From the waist of the *Wild Duck* came yells of pain, roars of rage and a clamoring for revenge, for canister had spread havoc there. The Admiral had delivered his larboard broadside.

"God forgive him—and me!" groaned William.

Then he straightened up and addressed his lieutenant.

"Very well, Mr. McLaren," said he, in a calm but strangely unnatural voice. "You may fire!

"Pitch," he added, turning to the gunner. "You will not——"

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He stopped, aghast, yet with a strange relief and recognition of Providence expanding in his heart. Jack Pitch was lying motionless and bleeding across the quarter-deck's nine-pounder.

The crack gunner had been killed at the first broadside!

CHAPTER XVI

THE FIGHT

THEY had been fighting half an hour. The surface of the sea was as smooth as a pond in a still wood, and the dusk was tarnishing the crimson in the west; but the greater the calm the mightier seemed the reverberations that continuously shattered it.

A domed circle of smoke lay upon the oily waters. Flash upon flash of flame illumined its dim interior. It was a roaring, spitting, shrieking volcano upon the sea, the outlet of some marine hell.

The two vessels lay almost within leaping distance of each other. Their sails, only half downhauled, hung in tatters. The *Wild Duck's* maintopmast was a drooping mass of tangled timber, cordage and singeing canvas. Her hull was horribly scarred, even to the naked eye in that gloom, and great volumes of acrid smoke rolled in air, billowing and heaving like black wool.

The *Goliath* was in no better situation. Her mainmast was gone by the board, where it still lay like a broken tree caught between heaven and earth. The main boom had been blown into pieces that littered the deck like riven logs in a tangle of creepers. About three feet above the waterline on the larboard side a shot had torn open a yawning, ragged hole.

But still she was afloat, still no worse off then the enemy.

The Admiral stood by the mizzenmast, against which he leaned his one arm while he surveyed his deck, issued his orders and marked every shot at or from the privateer.

His face was grim but quiet. His eyes were filled with battle joy, but keen with a steely coldness. He spoke a word of cheer as Davie Lyon, his pan'aloons stained with his own blood, limped by with a bucket of powder.

"Cheerily-o, Sir Cloudesley!"

"Aye, aye, Adm'ral!" cried Davie, like one intoxicated. "An' cuss the Pauper Roll!"

Old Aaron was in the thick of the fight, as were David, the Captain, and Denny, the sailing-master. By the guns stood Marvin Patch, with a blood-stained rag of canvas twisted around his right forearm. A ball from a smallarm had torn Aaron Bunker's cheek and the red blood vividly stained his white whiskers. But old Aaron was shouting and cheering as lustily as the youngest of the fighters.

From the beginning David had justified himself as a Sarvice, although his bravery had something of high-strung frenzy in it. He was everywhere, with eyes of a madman and a face as pallid as death, delivering the Admiral's commands, seeing to their speedy execution, yelling encouragement and —*cursing!*

Toward the end of the engagement, as the smoke-beshadowed *Wild Duck* vomited another broadside, the scholar suddenly threw up his arms and dropped upon the deck. He did not rise again, but lay in an unconscious heap.

The Admiral saw him go down, but never left his own position by the mizzen, nor ordered a man to his son's assistance. Every other man was somebody's son, and this was war! It was the crisis of the battle. Every man at his station and alive was worth an added chance of victory.

Young Colson, a Burleigh's lad, rushed to the Admiral with the news of David's fall.

"What of it?" snapped the Admiral. "Back to your post, ye swab, and show ye can shoot more'n rabbits."

Young Colson, an inveterate rabbit shooter ashore, was serving on the *Goliath* as a sharpshooter.

The smoke cleared for a moment. The firing had ceased as if by mutual consent. It was eloquent of the conditions on both sides.

"I think we'll win, sir!" cried Captain Denny, as he rushed past.

"Don't think. *Fight!*" said the Admiral.

All eyes peered through the double dusk at the *Wild Duck*. She was becalmed, as was the *Goliath*, and her listed, broken appearance was strangely unlike the upright grace of the bark that had flown birdlike through La Tête Passage an hour before.

"She's done for," said the Admiral in a practical tone. "No use to save her as a prize. Ahoy!" he bellowed. "Aboard the *Wild Duck!*"

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"Ahoy the *Goliath!*" came from the privateer in the sudden lull.

"Do ye strike your colors?"

"Sir," said an even, strong voice through the gloom of smoke and dusk, "I'll strike my colors when Admiral Sarvice hoists the American flag!"

"Well said, b'gad!" exclaimed the Admiral. "Mr. Denny, instruct Gunner Patch to give 'em another broadside, when ready."

As he was speaking the privateer's starboard side belched a sheet of flame and smoke. They had been busy during the lull. The Admiral felt the schooner shudder beneath him. His cocked hat was wafted from his head. The mizzen against which he leaned swayed and went over the *Goliath's* quarter with a nerve-racking crash.

The Admiral, unscathed, picked up his hat, replaced it upon his silvery head with a growl, and cried—

"Lively there, Mr. Gunner!"

Patch was unable to deliver a broadside, but a single shot clove the intervening space. The shot was backed by all the training and mathematical science of months of practise.

The ball—an eighteen pounder—seemed to strike the water below and a little short of the *Wild Duck*. But when the smoke cleared there was a great hole visible in the privateer's side, half above and half below the water line.

"Bravo, lad!" shouted the Admiral, raising his voice to an emotional pitch for the first time during the engagement. "Bravo, gunner! That settles it!"

Nevertheless the *Wild Duck* opened fire again, this time with small-arms. It was apparent to her own people that she must founder, and there was no time to reload the heavy guns. Her magazine, too, was awash.

"Mizzen and main!" cried the old sea lion. "They'd go down fighting. Damme, I begin to understand the *Frolic* and the *Wasp*.

"Ahoy, *Wild Duck!*" he roared. "Ye've done well, and down with flying colors y'are privileged to go. But cease firing. I'll stand by to pick ye up!"

The firing abruptly ceased, not upon the Admiral's suggestion, but because the *Wild Duck* began to lurch and settle.

"Jump! Jump, lads!" came as a friendly roar from the conqueror *Goliath*.

In the dim light the men of the *Wild Duck* were seen to leap into the sea and swim toward the schooner. Then, and not until then, did the Admiral quit his stand by the shattered mizzenmast.

"Mr. Denny," said he, "pick 'em up and do all you can for 'em. *They're men!* If the commander's alive I'll receive him in my cabin."

Then the old fighter, his heart divided between pride, elation and anxiety, went below in search of David.

He found the scholar propped on an improvised couch in the messroom. Old Aaron, himself powder- and blood-stained, was forcing brandy between the scholar's teeth. David opened his eyes as the Admiral stood beside him.

"Admiral," he said faintly, "have we really won?"

"Won? Damme, boy, we've sunk the rebel and taken him and his crew. How is it, Aaron?"

"Shot through the thigh, sir, but he'll come through."

"It's all right," said David bravely. "Just a word from you, Admiral, and I'll be well."

"And you shall have that word, David!" said the Admiral huskily, for this phase of the scholar appealed mightily. "*Captain* Sarvice, you have this day proved yourself true to the traditions of your family, your race and the British Navy. You shall be named in the dispatches, sir!"

He was turning away when a bright thought seemed to occur to him. He came back. Bending over the prostrate scholar, he beamed as he whispered:

"And if your heart is set on the encroacher's lass, my boy, why—marry her! And God bless you both!"

"Thank you sir," said David, and he closed his eyes, smiling.

The Admiral then passed around the messroom which was filled with the wounded. He had a brave word for the sorely hurt, a jest for the merely scratched and a special little speech for the men to whom his condescension meant much.

"Ye only need a wooden leg to be an Admiral, Sir Cloudesley," said he to the late Pauper Roll, whose leg had been drilled by a slug.

"A great shot, lad," was what he said to Marvin Patch, whose right arm was badly shattered. "But what good's a gunner who can't duck the other fellow's fire?"

"As for you, ye old chunk o' slumgullion!"

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he snorted, glaring affectionately at Aaron Bunker. "The man who was at Pondicherry and Geriah and comes out of a penny-ha'penny engagement with a singed whisker, ought to be *ashamed* of himself!"

Satisfied that the *Goliath* was good to float for many a day yet, and having given some orders relative to the prisoners and their welfare, the Admiral went aft to his cabin.

WAS THE door was opened, William Sarvice arose to his feet and saluted his father.

He was clad in shirt and breeches that clung wetly to his strong frame. The light sword still dangled from his waist. He was generally disheveled from blood, water and smoke, but he seemed unhurt and faced his conqueror with calm face, squared shoulders and heels close together.

The Admiral stood in the doorway. There was never a man so shocked, so shaken. He clutched at the jamb for support. He breathed hard. His eyes became wide, with the pupils distended.

For a moment it seemed that the old man must cry out. His lips moved, but they made no sound. His face hardened, then softened, and finally seemed to glow a little, as if it pleased him, after the first shock and natural weakness, to think that it was *his* son who had fought so bravely.

Then the bitterness of *his* son fighting against the flag to which his forefathers had brought much honor, came back upon him with a swamping sense of misery.

His bitterness waxed to fury for a few moments. But this was to be the test of his justice, his consistency, his dignity, his strength as a man—aye, and as a father. He must acquit himself as became his race and his rank.

His manner was calm and quite cold when at last he spoke.

"Captain Campbell, I presume?" said he.

"So-called," said William, and each perceived the tremor of repression in the other's voice.

William drew the light sword from its sheath and proffered it, handle outward, to the man who had beaten him in open fight. The Admiral bowed and took the sword. He saluted his son with the blade.

"Captain Campbell," he said, and now he was full master of his mind, nerve and dignity; "permit me to say that I never engaged a better or braver foe. Were you an Englishman, sir, and so served your country, many a father might not be ashamed to call you his son."

CHAPTER XVII

AFTER THE BATTLE

IF THERE was any doubt about the Admiral's attitude toward his son William, it was settled when Quartermaster Bunker appeared in answer to a summons.

William's face lighted up at sight of the old servant. Aaron had learned the identity of the privateer Captain before he came to the cabin, and the old servitor could no more suppress his joy at seeing William than he could refrain from holding out his hand.

The Admiral happened to be studying a face of Nelson on the bulkhead just then. It was not in his heart to deny Aaron what he had denied himself—the pleasure of welcoming the "boy." He pretended not to see that which discipline would have forbidden.

"Master William!" gasped Aaron.

William could not reply at once, and before he would have tried to, the Admiral turned around.

"Quartermaster," said he firmly, "this is Captain William Campbell whom we must honor as a brave commander and an efficient seaman. You will provide him with dry clothing—some of my son David's might do—and accord him every comfort and the consideration due his rank."

Turning to William with bending courtesy, but unbending purpose, he added:

"We are unfortunately not shipshape—thanks to the efficiency of your gunners—but the freedom of the ship is yours. The quartermaster will attend to your immediate requirements."

There was nothing more to be said; yet both William and Aaron lingered. William's face was very white, while the quartermaster looked as if his world had come to an end.

Finally, as the Admiral showed signs of impatience, William saluted and turned to leave the cabin. Aaron stared blankly from father to son; then he, too, retreated. As he passed out after Captain Campbell, he glanced back at his master. It was doglike fidelity looking doglike reproach.

When they were both gone, the Admiral

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dropped into a chair and laid his broad right hand across his brow. Then the hand was lowered and he stared into the nothingness of misery. He seemed about to yield to the physical and emotional strain of the day's affairs. Was it only this morning that he spied the American bark bearing down upon the stranded frigates?

He remained staring at nothing but a little while, however. Presently he got up, braced himself and passed out to the deck.

Where the *Wild Duck* had been, the water was marred by a few dark blots of floating *débris*.

South by east, three great ships lay off Head Harbor. They were the frigates, which had sailed in the wake of the Admiral as soon as the tide took them off Indian Island. They had arrived in time to see the finish of the battle, but, like the contestants, they had been completely becalmed.

Toward the schooner three pinnaces and a gig were coming from the frigates. A senior officer brought apologies from Rear Admiral Colchester, together with enthusiastic congratulations.

"Did you capture the Yankee commander alive?" was the officer's first question.

"I did," replied the Admiral.

"That man deserves hanging!"

"Hanging!" blazed the Admiral. "Mizzen and main! Because the blockheads he trapped deserve disrating, does he deserve hanging? No, my young spark! Captain Campbell is my prisoner and, damme, he has my respect, rebel as he is!"

"Well—er—well, well!" said the officer, and he hastily changed the subject, adding softly to himself, "Peppery old cock!"

It appeared that Rear Admiral Colchester, having marked the fury of the engagement and the serious damage done, had thought it advisable, as the calm was likely to continue, to tow the *Goliath* into Head Harbor.

"The tide's ebbing fast, sir, and in the right direction," said the officer. "The pinnaces ought to tow her like a feather."

In a little while the *Goliath* was yielding to the combined strength of thirty powerful oarsmen. In an hour, when the moon was shining clearly across the world, the schooner dropped anchor in Head Harbor. Thus William returned to the very spot where his adventuring began.

Head Harbor was as black and silent as a midnight graveyard, but the woods were full of smugglers who must have witnessed the engagement with tense interest. They knew that William commanded the bark, as they knew that his father commanded the schooner.

The wounded, and the prisoners, together with the Admiral, David and William, were landed on the Campobello side of the narrow channel. Not one of the dead or severely wounded had been rescued from the privateer. Like Jack Pitch, who had fired his last gun, and Lieutenant McLaren, who had fought his last fight, they had all gone to the bottom with flying colors.

AT THE point on the Campobello shore where the North Road descended to Head Harbor, a small crowd of islanders had assembled to learn the result of the sea-fight. Among them was a handful of the Admiral's people. They had traveled the seven miles from Welchpool in the Admiral's coach, which they had borrowed for their own use upon the plea that it might be needed.

This was Burleigh's end of the island and the crowd was republican in sympathy. They did not cheer the Admiral's victory, but they released their voices when William stepped out of the pinnace.

"No, boys, no!" said William, quickly lifting his hand. The cheer was choked off.

John Burleigh stepped out from the crowd and held out his hand.

"You're a right fair man, Sarvice," said he to William. "We're sorry you lost, but maybe 'tis better so. At least you couldn't have landed where you'll be more welcome. We're glad to see you back."

The Admiral said nothing.

The old coach, drawn by the Island's one horse, stood waiting. David, Marvin Patch and Davie Lyon were carefully placed in it. Then the Admiral waved Captain Campbell to the box beside the versatile Aaron, himself taking the fourth seat in the body of the coach.

Presently, arrangements having been made for the burial of the *Goliath's* dead and the care of her wounded, the Admiralty vehicle started up the hill. It was a stiff climb over Burleigh's Head, which lies between Head Harbor and the encroacher's village. At one time, in order to relieve the overtaxed horse, the Admiral and William

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descended. For a space the coach moved slowly uphill, father and son walking behind as at a funeral.

At the top of the hill the horse stopped to blow. From Burleigh's Head they could see the wide spread of the bay and the islands all brushed by the light of a moon that cruised high in a clear, starry sky.

The silence, which had been disturbed only by the blowing of the horse, was further broken by a faint voice from within the coach.

"Who is that?" asked David. "*Not William!*"

For a moment William found himself looking intently at the moon, his fists clenched and his teeth shut. But a wave of shame swept away the old antipathy.

"How is it, David?" said he, stepping to the side of the open vehicle. "Don't move. Yes—it is I, William. I hope you are not hurt much."

"How is it you are here?" asked the scholar in a startled voice.

"It's quite a long story," said William evenly, "and it's chilly on the hill here. We'd better be moving on."

The coach came to Burleigh's Beach. There were lights in the houses, but not a person upon the single street. Yet every one was alert. There were silhouettes in half open doorways and against illumined windows. It was as if a plague wagon were passing.

As the coach traveled around Windmill Point, William glanced across Otter Harbor at Bald Head. In its shadow twinkled a single light that was familiar. What William did not know, but pictured as possible, was a lithe woman with sea-hued eyes, gazing into a log fire—waiting.

And so, after five years, he would see her again!

He fell into a deep musing as the coach lumbered over the little-used road encircling Otter Harbor. The Admiral was silent, too, although by and by he essayed, as politeness to his prisoner required of him, general conversation on divers subjects—the French, the European imbrogilo, even the defeated American invasion of Canada; but never a word that implied a blood relationship between himself and his prisoner.

It took over three hours to travel from Head Harbor to the Admiralty. The road was rough. The woods, shutting out the moonlight, cast deeper darkness, and slow going was necessary for the comfort of the wounded.

When they arrived at Welchpool the village was asleep, all thought of the Admiral's return that night having been abandoned. But Patch's wife was aroused, and into her care were consigned the gunner and "Sir Cloudesley," who were to be the heroes of the morrow's session of the Wharf-End Civic Forum.

At the Admiralty, David's wound was carefully dressed. William himself did the delicate work. Aaron stood by with a lamp. The Admiral held the scholar's wrists and swore for him at appropriate moments of excruciation.

It was an anomalous grouping, an anomalous situation, but salutary. For the time, family differences were suspended, forgotten; and in the dressing of his brother's wound William came as near to loving David as was humanly possible in him at that time.

But when David confessed himself easier and ready to face the night, when all was done that had served temporarily to bind the three in sympathy, the real situation stood naked before them again. The Admiral requested "Captain Campbell" to follow him.

William's heart beat rapidly as he entered the "cabin aft," from which he had departed after a stormy scene five years before. He wondered if the Admiral was now about to unburden the vials of his wrath.

But the old gentleman had already made his decision and taken his stand. He mixed two glasses of kallibogus, handed one to William and lifted his own with splendid dignity.

"Captain Campbell," said he, eying William over the glass's edge, "war is an unpleasant affair between men of the same blood. That is to say," he added quickly, "I am confident that the best of America is the English blood in her veins.

"But we have civilized war to the extent that when the rules of conquest, defeat and parole have been observed, a man may honorably clink glasses today with the man he would have shot yesterday and may have the honor of cutting down tomorrow.

"Sir," he concluded, as if he had often made the same speech before, "my hospitality, such as it is, is at your command. You give me your parole not to leave this island until the war between my country

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and yours is at an end, or until I shall have arranged an exchange with the enemy?"

"I give my parole," said William.

"I thank you, sir," said the Admiral, making a movement with his glass of kallibogus. "To your good health, Captain Campbell!"

"And to yours, sir," said William.

When they put down the glasses, there was an awkward pause.

"Well?" said the Admiral defiantly.

"May I ask one question?" said William slowly.

"You may *ask* anything you choose," said the Admiral, losing color nevertheless. "The amenities of civilized warfare do not allow me to put a padlock on a man's tongue."

"How is—my mother?" was the gentle bomb that William dropped.

For a moment or two the Admiral had difficulty in controlling his fury—or whatever the inward tempest might have been that was outwardly wrought upon his face.

He rapped with his wooden fist for Aaron Bunker.

"Sir," said he, turning coldly upon his prisoner, "*my wife* died exactly two years and two months ago."

When Aaron Bunker entered, he found the Admiral standing up, very erect and very stern. Across the table stood William Sarvice, his head bowed like one who has but newly received sentence.

"Quartermaster," said the Admiral steadily, "you will conduct Captain Campbell to his room."

CHAPTER XVIII

HIS FATHER'S PRISONER

IT WAS next morning, just after breakfast. David was, of course, in his room, but doing very well. In the library of the Admiralty William stared moodily through a window, while the Admiral sat laboring with a goosequill. He was sending to John Burleigh the long-deferred reply regarding the affair of David and Betty, when the door opened and the lady herself entered.

She did not see William at first, nor he her. She rushed to the Admiral's side and cried:

"Oh, is it true? Is he hurt?"

William started at the sound of her voice and spun around.

"Tut!" said the Admiral. "A scratch, my dear—mere scratch. And lookee here, lass," he added, handing her the letter upon which his signature was but drying.

"There!" said he, beaming like a generous tyrant yielding a long-sought favor.

Betty took the letter and read it. She was still unconscious of William's presence, but moved toward the window for better light. The Admiral had written to the encroacher:

SIR:

If my son wishes to marry your daughter, and your daughter wishes to marry my son, what business is it of yours—or mine, for that matter?

Betty's face colored deeply.

"Oh!" she said, raising her eyes.

Then she saw William and the letter fluttered to the floor. She at once covered her confusion by picking up the letter and returning it to the Admiral.

Her sea-gray eyes seemed grayer as they again rested on her old comrade of the woods and waters. She was vaguely conscious of his splendid maturity, but what struck deepest was the familiar calm of his bearing, the same blue eyes, the honest, good-natured smile, and the hair that was golden against his bronzed temples.

"Betty!" said he almost tenderly.

She recovered herself immediately. She resented the intimate address, the intimate note, considering what she thought his cavalier behavior.

"So it is you?" she said lightly. "How quickly one remembers after having forgotten so long!"

The Admiral was sealing his letter. He pretended to be aware of nothing else toward. William flushed slightly. It seemed to him that a child of yesterday had suddenly addressed him in fluent Greek. And he could believe his eyes little more than his ears.

The deep-sea lass had become a woman—tall, strong of thigh and deep-bosomed. Her head was poised with a native pride. Her face was one of moving truth rather than beauty; her features, though irregular, mobile with possibilities of great physical and spiritual passion.

While the brass-dialed clock in the hall ticked five times, they faced one another, he marveling, she defiant, almost challenging.

"There!" snorted the Admiral, smacking the sealed letter with his ponderous fist. "That's done! Now, young woman," he

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added, turning to Betty and quite discounting the presence of his prisoner of war, "when do you propose to marry David?"

William's eyes slowly widened. Betty's gaze fell before their mute inquiry.

"Tell me, how is he? May I not—may I see him?" she stammered for subterfuge.

"If you will excuse me," said the prisoner of war, moving toward the door, "I think you have a private matter to discuss."

"Certainly, certainly," said the Admiral. "Very good of you, Captain Campbell—very thoughtful."

The door closed upon the Admiral and Betty. William walked across the lawn and presently found himself wandering aimlessly along the North Road.

"So!" said he after a while, blankly addressing the remark to the bole of an oak.

He left the road and struck off upon a wood-trail.

Betty, in the meantime, remained with the Admiral. She had heard early that morning of the result of the sea fight, the wounding of David, the sinking of the privateer and the discovery that her commander was William Sarvice.

At once her brain whirled, and it continued to whirl until she reached the Admiralty. It was only when she entered the library and saw the material figure of William that self-control returned—that is, feminine self-control, which often impels action contrary to the real will to do.

She instinctively raised a barrier between herself and the man she either loved or hated.

Presently she found herself in David's room. She fell on her knees at his bedside and told him the news of the Admiral's letter. It was necessary for her to have a reason for her agitation. She made a luxury of tenderness for David out of her contrariness.

"Betty?" said the scholar-warrior with a faint but happy smile. She had never been like this before—to him.

"Yes, 'tis Betty, Davie lad," she whispered. "Oh, I am proud of you, but—suppose you had been killed! What would I have done, David?"

The scholar suddenly averted his eyes.

"Have you seen my brother William?" he asked.

"Yes," she said simply.

There was a pause. Then she lowered her gaze and stammered:

"David—I know it is wrong, but—but I can't help it. . . . I hate William!"

When she was leaving David, she lightly touched his brow with her lips.

THE object of her "hatred" had disappeared when she returned to the "lower deck." The Admiral was winding up the brass-dialed clock. The old man's face bore signs of fatigue, yet there was a happiness in it which had not been there in years. He pinched Betty's cheek and asked what she thought of "that spitfire David."

They talked for a while, Betty hoping to hear something of William, while assuring herself that she did not care to hear anything about him. But the Admiral had nothing to say about his prisoner of war, except that he seemed to be a brave fellow and it was a pity he was a renegade.

"For I understand," said he, looking straight at Betty, "that he was born of a fine old family of Loyalists. But there's a black sheep in every flock, I suppose, and it's a happy family that has no skeleton stowed away in a locker 'tween decks."

Betty said nothing, but now that she perceived William's cruel situation—a prisoner of war in his own home and to a father who refused to recognize him as anything else—her heart went out to him.

As she went along the North Road toward Burleigh's Cove, she saw the man of her thoughts emerge from a wood-trail a little ahead of her.

She stopped short. She feared to meet him without the presence of a third party. She could not trust herself. Despite her heart's pretenses of enmity, she knew she could not treat him as a stranger.

She darted behind one of the Admiral's oaks by the roadside and watched him pass. His hands were clasped behind his back and he walked slowly. The impulse was momentarily strong upon her to cry the old, cheery "*William ahoy!*" and startle him back to life as it had once been between them. But she feared a possible immediate result.

Betty watched him pass, watched him until he was out of sight, then slowly continued on her way to the Cove, her hands clasped before her and her gaze upon the ground.

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AS THE days went by, however, William's position did not develop so sadly as it had threatened.

It soon became apparent to the privateer Captain that the tragedy had a touch of comedy in it. The Admiral was glad to have his son with him again, even under a distasteful identity. It was also apparent that the old man made no effort to negotiate an exchange with the enemy and had no intention of so negotiating.

William, on his side, perceived that his presence meant much to his father, that it gladdened the Admiral's heart, illumined his face and brought cheer to his speech. The tears of old age would readily come into Aaron Bunker's eyes when he saw these two sit down together, toast one another at dinner and laugh at each other's stories of the sea, or sit long and late over the kallibogus in the "cabin aft," discussing international politics.

Day after day it was a common habit of father and son—that is, of Admiral Sarvice and Captain Campbell—to promenade the "quarterdeck" together, arguing the merits and demerits of the Anglo-American War. The argument would grow hot. The Admiral would be polite to his guest—polite in his own fiery way; but his unyielding style of debate would often lead to a shrug and silence on his opponent's part.

"There!" the Admiral would snort. "I've got you on a lee shore!"

William would smile and let it rest.

Quite often William visited his brother's room. If the Admiral were not present he dropped the rôle of Captain Campbell and spoke freely with the scholar.

Yet, despite his best efforts, William was conscious of a restraint in their intercourse. He could feel it in David's manner and, as a result, in his own. David seemed to have something weighing upon his mind. Sometimes William would find the scholar regarding him with a strange fixity of gaze, but the gaze would be transferred quickly the moment their eyes met.

"Have you seen Betty?" David asked one day.

It was the first time he had mentioned her name to William since his return.

"Yes," said his brother evenly.

"We are—we are to be married," said David with a tentative note.

"So," said William without inflection.

Then there was silence, fraught with the sense that there was something David had not the courage to utter.

William, in the meantime, was doctor in attendance upon the victims of the sea fight. And Betty came to the Admiralty every day now, faithful in her attendance upon David and studiously friendly toward William—the studious friendliness which is as cold as the pole and as distant from the sun.

"Campbell," chuckled the Admiral one day, as Betty waved a hand to the pair on the "quarterdeck" and disappeared into the Admiralty, "there's going to be a marriage in Cana. Mark me!"

"What does Burleigh say?" asked William.

It was the nearest to the past that he had yet ventured.

"Burleigh," said the Admiral, purposely overlooking the breach; "Burleigh will do as I say, confound him!"

There was a pause. The Admiral fell into a reverie. Suddenly he faced his prisoner of war and said thoughtfully:

"Burleigh is an encroacher—a land thief. But I am seventy-seven years old, and I have learned this much, Captain Campbell: we are none of us without fault. Yet confound him for a fish-brained sheep stealer!" he growled to himself. "He hasn't acknowledged my letter of consent."

As a matter of fact, John Burleigh had lit his pipe with the Admiral's letter and chuckled a word that might have been the Burleigh motto—

"Wait!"

CHAPTER XIX

MOSTLY ABOUT BETTY

THE late Autumn faded into Winter. The high winds began to roar around the Admiralty. The northers, gathering iciness from the hard-driven Bay, hissed through the windbreaks of spruce and seemed to bite the very paint off the window ledges.

"Anyhow," said Marvin Patch, "there ain't no fog in Winter, while 'n Spring—— By Chris'mas! It was that thick when I was shinglin' my house last May that I had to feel for the nailheads."

With the coming of the new year the island was rigid under frozen snow. It was about this time that Betty relented toward William.

It fell upon a cold, clear day when there

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was little work to do. Half the islanders were tobogganing down Buck's Hill, which descended into the village and ended at the Coöperative Store and the wharf. Captain William joined in the Winter revels and hit upon an idea.

"There are a dozen men to every sled," said he. "Why not get up the dories? They're flat-bottomed and smooth and they'll hold twenty at a time. Use the oars for drags and steering."

Up they brought the dories from the beach. The maiden trip resulted in a capsize in front of the Coöperative, and fifteen men, William among them, were heaped up in the snow, a yelling, laughing mass.

The next run was a success. The spice of danger added to the zest of the game, and soon half a dozen fisher dories were tobogganing one after another down Buck's Hill.

Just as William was about to captain another doryload, he saw Betty among the onlookers. Her face was alight with the old adventure spirit and her eyes were upon William.

"Ahoy, Miss Betty!" he hailed, sensing her mood. "There's room for one more!"

With a little impulsive laugh she came forward and stepped into the vacant place by William's side. At once Marvin Patch jumped out of the dory, as did the other men.

"Special cruise!" they shouted. "Special cruise for the lady."

Left together in the boat, William glanced at Betty and she at him. They laughed together just as twenty pairs of hands launched the boat-sled downward with a terrific shove.

"This is like old days, Betty," said William, as the keen air whistled by and her hand clutched his arm for safety.

The dory darted down the hill at fearful speed, for all hands had contributed to its impetus. At once William perceived that a mistake had been made. He seized an oar and drove it into the hard snow on either side, but his efforts availed little to stay that dory's prodigious descent.

In a few seconds they were opposite the Coöperative Store, where they should have stopped, and would have had there been more oars than one to drag with. They were still going at top speed. Before them lay the wharf, and beyond that a sea of arctic temperature.

A roar of alarm came from the crest of Buck's Hill as the boat-sled sped out along the wharf.

"Can you stop her in time?" asked Betty in a strained voice.

"I'll try!" replied William, tearing up the snow with his oar.

The dory slowed up perceptibly, but it was apparent that it could never be stopped this side of the stringpiece.

When the edge of the wharf was but ten paces ahead, William dropped his oar, lifted Betty in his arms without a word, and jumped!

The dory, empty, shot over the stringpiece and struck the sea with a heavy splash, while William and Betty rolled together in the snow.

For a half minute they lay there, coiled in each other's arms. Then William said—whispered, for some reason—

"Are you hurt, lass?" for she was very still.

"No," said a quiet voice, "and if you will take away your arms I think I could get up."

They scrambled to their feet. Betty's face was crimson. Her hair and garments were sprinkled with snow. William felt his yearning for her burn in every fiber.

After that incident, as if to convince William that he could make no profit of having held her to his heart for nearly a minute, Betty became more distant than ever. David was now able to be up and about the house, and again he and Betty pursued knowledge.

William gave up trying to understand or propitiate her. He applied himself to the Admiral with the hope that one of those days the farce-tragedy would end, the barrier be broken down and father and son stand toward one another in a natural light.

But the months went on without the slightest change in the Admiral, save that he seemed to grow younger and was irritable only when Captain Campbell happened not to be at hand for an argument.

"Master William," said the old quartermaster one afternoon when the Admiral was snoring in the "cabin aft," "he loves ye as ever he did. It's just his way—his pride, and—" here Aaron whispered mysteriously —"*he likes the sittyation!*"

Spring came, and with it the fogs that Marvin Patch said could be shingled. Then the fogs cleared and the glorious Passamaquoddy Summer painted the world with blue and green, with silver lights by day

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and purple shadows by night. The schools of pollock roared and splashed in the bay.

"Miss Betty," said William, interrupting a scholarly session at the Admiralty one day, "will you come and scoop pollock while I row the boat? I'll promise to keep the sun in my back."

"No," said Betty abruptly, and in a manner that hurt William (who was used to it) less than it shocked and surprised David. Later, the scholar asked Betty about it and was snubbed.

IT CAME at last to the tenth of July, a day that William never forgot, any more than the rest of Passamaquoddy forgot the eleventh. On that tenth of July, William Sarvice struck the trail of a buck on the Fundy side of the island. He tracked the deer to within a quarter mile of Southern Head, the point of rocks where Betty and he used to hunt seal. On this little peninsula William felt sure that he would find the buck.

He proceeded cautiously and was rewarded by the sight of a moving object in the brush. He crept forward, his gun ready and his eyes fixed on the moving object, which presently stopped and looked at him. What the hunter saw was a blue worsted cap surmounting wavy brown hair and a pair of sea-gray eyes.

"Don't fire, William," said the Betty of yore, stepping into the open. She was dressed for the woods in short skirt and high moccasins, and she carried a musket.

"What—what were you hunting?" William asked lamely.

"Deer," said she, pointing to tracks that shot away at right angles to both of them. "He scented me, turned back, scented you and—he's off!"

"Too bad," said William.

There followed an awkward pause. He glanced at her and she at him. Then they averted their eyes and looked everywhere but at each other. The woods were silent and green. Down through the foliage came shafts of amber light from the leaf-fretted afternoon sun. From near at hand came the booming reverberation of the sea upon great rocks.

"You don't suppose there might be a seal on the ledge at this tide?" said William.

She did not answer. When he turned to look at her, she was leaning against a tree and her face was buried in her bare arms. The musket lay on the moss where she had dropped it.

"Betty!" said William, laying a comforting hand upon her shoulder. "Tell it to me, lass. Tell me your trouble."

His voice was soft, but pitched low in the effort against self-betrayal.

"Oh, you know," she sobbed miserably. "I'm so unhappy—ever since——"

She stopped short, realizing the situation into which a moment's impulse had committed her.

But the time had come when William and she must balance accounts. She knew it. Without lifting her head from her cradling arms, Betty said—

"I am to marry David."

"And you love somebody else," he supplied quietly.

She was silent. After a while he said—

"Why have you treated me so, Betty?"

"I? You?" she said, amazed. It was on her tongue to be angry, but all she said was:

"You never wrote. I heard you were dead."

William's heart began to beat fast. She cared after all. She was excusing herself, accusing herself.

"I did write," said he quietly.

"I never got the letter," she said, adding with feminine interest, "What was in it?"

"Nothing that would interest you now—only about the *Weasel*. I sent the letter by Lank. Of course he was killed, but—you ought to have got it."

"The *Weasel*—Captain Lank——" she said, her eyes widening with wonder. "What had you to do with the *Weasel?*"

It was William's turn to open his eyes in amaze.

"I captured it," said he simply, "and sent it to my father as a prize. Of course, Jones bested Lank and David bested Jones after that, but——

"Ah! then," he said, his face clearing, "David did not recognize me, after all."

"I don't understand," said Betty.

"Neither do I," laughed William, but he told her what was related in the letter and what he witnessed later from the deck of the *Fairplay*.

"You say you gave the letter to Captain Lank?" said she presently.

When he described all the circumstances, she fell into a kind of reverie. Into her memory flashed the picture of that day in the boat with Aaron Bunker and David

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Sarvice. She saw the scholar bending over the dead man in the *Weasel's* boat. She saw him straighten up with an open paper in one hand and a sealed missive in the other. She saw him put the sealed letter in his pocket ere he went out to the *Victory*.

Presently she turned to William and said:

"I remember now. David found a letter in Captain Lank's pocket. David must have kept it. What he did with it I don't know. I never thought about it till now. It must have been your letter to me."

"David found it—must have kept it?" William echoed. "That could not be. It was addressed to you. Even if he opened it in error——"

He stopped, conscious that his words implied a doubt of his brother's honor.

"Anyway," he broke off, "it doesn't matter any more. What does matter, Betty, is your happiness. Come, lass. Be frank with me."

The calm of reverie left her face and was succeeded by embarrassment.

"There is nothing I *can* tell you, William," said she.

"I see what you mean. But is it nothing that you are to marry David, yet love some one else? Is that fair to yourself, or to—David?"

"Would frankness to you, William, be fairness to David?" she asked with a little smile.

"Frankness to some one—any one," said he. "I am sure of it—as sure as I am that, without love, you and David would make one another very unhappy, to say nothing of this other some one you love and who, possibly, loves you. Now, tell me!"

The last words were like a command. She obeyed it.

"I have promised David," she said slowly, "and——yes, William, I love somebody else."

As she said it, she lifted her sea-gray eyes and looked truthfully into William's earnest face. He experienced a singing sensation in his heart and mind, but resisted the impulse to take her to him. Indeed, he drew back a step, fearing her, fearing himself.

"Betty," he said in a low voice, "I want you to be silent and listen."

They stood facing each other, their eyes meeting. Into the stillness came the twittering of birds, the fall of a balsam cone, the distant chattering of a squirrel and the near roll of the sea.

"Our woods—our waters," she said, her eyes softening and her face radiant with a great understanding of herself and him and their oneness.

"Yes," said he; "but now—" for there was danger in tarrying—"let us go home."

It was late dusk when he left her between the Admiralty and the Cove. He did not even touch her hand, and she shyly bade him good night from a little distance.

"But, William," she added, "I—I want you to ask David about that letter. You see—you sent it to me and—I never got it. I want it—to keep."

CHAPTER XX

THE TRUTH COMES OUT

"I UNDERSTAND," said William, "that the *Goliath* was formerly the *Weasel*."

They were at dinner in the "messroom" that evening—the Admiral and Captain Campbell, with Quartermaster Bunker in attendance. David had gone to his room, pleading a headache.

"She was," said the Admiral; "captured by my son."

"Which one?" asked William upon the moment's impulse. He could not help it.

A spoon clattered upon the Admiral's plate. Aaron Bunker, attempting to replace it, dropped it again. The quartermaster seemed to have a sudden fit of ague.

"Sir!" said the Admiral, glaring defiance and challenge across the table.

William met his father's ire with calm, but his eyes glowed slightly. Perhaps that glow was the glitter of fight, possibly only the glimmer of humor.

"I seem to remember hearing somewhere that you had two sons," said he quite evenly.

The Admiral accepted the challenge.

"Captain Campbell," said he recovering his balance at the prospect of a tilt, "it is never safe for a comparative stranger to inquire into a family hiatus. The missing member may have been *hanged* in the meantime."

"True," said William. He was aware that the quartermaster was wildly signaling with a napkin. Aaron was behind the Admiral.

"As I was saying," the Admiral resumed, "the *Weasel* was captured by my son."

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"Which one?" repeated William, breaking bread.

The Admiral exploded.

"Are you mad?" he roared, while in the background Aaron threw up his hands in despair.

"No," said William. "Merely tired of a farce."

"Your good taste," said the Admiral, "is equaled only by your ill manners."

"Merely a matter of upbringing," said William with a smile. "Pardon me."

"Don't mention it!" snorted the Admiral.

As William said no more, the Admiral presently repeated the interrupted statement.

"The *Weasel* was captured by my son."

He paused and glared at Captain Campbell.

"I grant that," said the latter, "In fact, I never had any doubt about it. But I would like to hear your version of the affair."

The Admiral relaxed. He chuckled. He thought he had won the passage, and quite genially he proceeded with the story of David's heroism.

"So," said William, when narration had brought the captured *Weasel* to anchor in Welchpool Bay. "But was the blood-stained paper pinned on Lank's coat the only clue to the mystery of where the schooner came from, how it got into Passamaquoddy and what vessel had first engaged it?"

"There was nothing more," replied the Admiral. "The wooden-legged rascal escaped. Naturally he did not return at any time to explain, any more than did the hand who was with him."

"You mean Tingley?" said William.

"Tingley? Who the devil's Tingley?"

"Tingley was the sailor's name—a Portland man."

"Mizzen and main! What do *you* know about it?"

"You see," said William, deftly engaged with a knife and fork and a piece of mutton, "I seem to have heard a story about that, too, which is perhaps why I was curious about the identity of your son."

"Hrrmmph!" rumbled the Admiral, while Aaron signaled with the napkin. "Even a donkey has long ears."

"True, and a lion's skin sometimes," William chuckled.

"The story was," he continued imperturbably, "that the *Weasel* was captured by an American privateer south of Grand Manan and sent to Campobello as a prize."

"Bilge!" said the Admiral. "What Yankee privateer would send a prize into a British port? Absurd on the face of it!"

"Rumor, of course, loves inconsistency," said Captain Campbell, "but I understood the privateer was a son of a British Admiral. That was why I was curious——"

The Admiral quickly interrupted.

"Quartermaster," said he, "fill Captain Campbell's glass with water. Kallibogus does not agree with him."

"Of course," continued William, unheeding, "the fact of your son David recapturing the prize would account for the confusion of identities."

"Bilge!" said the Admiral. "If any Yankee rebel sent a pirated vessel to me, I'd sink it sooner than soil my hands by touching its hawser."

"That is possibly what your son David was trying to do. I witnessed the incident."

"You? You!" said the Admiral.

Then he thought he understood.

"Ah! You, then, commanded the stranger in the offing."

"The privateer *Fairplay*. Yes."

The Admiral pushed his chair back and stood up. His face was of a pale purple hue and he was greatly wrought.

"Then *you* captured—sent——"

He stopped. To have gone further would have been to acknowledge William's identity. Presently he bowed.

"Captain Campbell," said he with fine courtesy, "I am sorry you lost your prize, and I am glad my son recaptured it. The fortunes of war, you will allow."

"The fortunes of war," William agreed. "But just one question: Who found that paper?"

"My son David."

"Was Lank's body searched after it was brought ashore?"

"Naturally."

"And there were no other papers—a letter, say? Anything that might have thrown light——"

"I have already stated, sir, that there was nothing further," said the Admiral stiffly.

"Beg pardon, s'r," put in Aaron Bunker, who had been developing symptoms of great interest. "Afore the body were brought ashore, Master David——"

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"Silence 'tween decks!" shouted the Admiral, glaring at his butler.

"Say nothing, Aaron," William cautioned.

"You, too—*silence!*" snorted the Admiral. "Damme, you talk as if you were a member of the family."

"I am either that, or your prisoner of war," said William. "I want to be treated as one or the other."

The Admiral was caught. He seemed for the moment on the verge of apoplexy. But he presently pulled himself together and said with much formal dignity:

"I beg your pardon, Captain Campbell. I had forgotten our relative positions for the moment."

He sat down again. Dinner was concluded in silence. Then the Admiral stiffly invited his paroled guest to the usual kallibogus discussion in the "cabin aft." But the paroled guest begged to be excused.

"Certainly!" snorted the Admiral with a mock bow. "You probably have some private affairs upon your mind."

THE Admiral and his son passed out together. The Admiral showed his complete self-control by ostentatiously winding up the brass-dialed clock in the hall.

William presently returned to the "messroom" alone. Aaron Bunker was pretending to clear up, but he was only fumbling with the dishes. The old servant's face was a study in expression of mental labor.

"Aaron," said William, "you were about to say that before the body was brought ashore, Master David——"

The expression of mental labor became one of lively distress.

"Never mind!" said William quickly.

He left the room, his face grave with thought and decision. A minute later he stood before David's bedroom door on the "upper deck." When he was bidden enter he went in and closed the door after him. Standing with his hands clasped over the doorknob behind him, he looked steadily at his brother David.

The senior wrangler sat by a little table. The light of a shaded lamp enhaloed his dark head and pale face and fell whitely upon an open book before him.

David read to the end of the paragraph, then languidly looked up to find himself the object of stern scrutiny.

"David," said William incisively, "*what did you do with the letter you took from the dead man's pocket?*"

A visible quiver passed over David's body. He straightened slightly in his chair and became rigid. His face was ghastly to behold. His eyes became dilated, then fixed in a startled stare.

Presently he stirred, swallowed once or twice, and spoke.

"What—letter?"

"My letter," William snapped, "addressed by me to Betty Burleigh, entrusted by me to Captain Edward Lank, and found by you upon his body in the boat. What did you do with it?"

"I don't understand," said David, the lamplight revealing a slow-gathering sheen of moisture upon his temples. "I know of no letter."

"Don't lie!" said William fiercely.

The scholar leaped to his feet.

"How dare you!" he cried shrilly.

"I accuse you of nothing," said William. "I only ask, what did you do with it?"

There was prolonged silence in the room. Then—

"I—burned it," said David, perceiving it useless farther to deny knowledge of the letter.

"Why did you burn it?"

A straight line—the mental concentration line—appeared between David's eyebrows. He became cold and keen.

"It was covered with blood," he reasoned slowly. "The name of the person to whom it was addressed was obliterated. It was private. It was probably a missive into which strange eyes had no right to pry. I burned it."

"So," said William. "Your sense of honor was so scrupulous that, sooner than open a letter to find out who, at least, had sent it and to whom, at least, it might be returned, you burned it!"

David made no answer at once. William laughed out loud.

"Is that the kind of honor you acquired at Oxford?" he demanded. "By Heaven! It is not the kind *my* father taught *me!*"

Still David was silent. His brain—once concentrated on the situation, his position, the problem of evasion—saw that he could give no logical explanation but the true one.

But he had not the moral courage to confess. He had tried many times since the *Goliath-Wild Duck* fight, during those hours

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when William's intercourse with him was marked by fraternal tenderness. He had failed to unburden his conscience when voluntary confession would have earned forgiveness, even admiration. Now he was caught. His pride could not stoop to humiliating admission under coercion.

"Listen to me," said William harshly. He was reading his brother's mind as easily as David read Euclid. "You found that letter. You placed it in your pocket. You forgot about it and read it only after your return with the *Weasel*. . . ."

David made no denial, but his head dropped slowly till his chin rested upon his breast.

"God knows what moved you to burn it," William went on. "You know what it revealed, aside from the fact of my capturing the *Weasel*. You are welcome to all the credit of the *Weasel*. I am prouder of being defeated by my father. But that letter revealed that I had not forgotten my home, my parents—and Betty; that my heart turned to them always. . . ."

Still silence.

"Was it hatred of me that made you do it?" William asked presently, his voice breaking into the silent intervals. "Was it your vanity? Was it jealousy of my father's esteem, of Betty's affection, or fear for your own half borrowed reputation? Or was it all of these?"

DAVID stood by the reading-lamp, steadying himself with one hand upon the table. He was a frozen man, a rigid statue. William had never moved his hands from the doorknob behind him, but his jaw muscles twitched and his blue eyes blazed.

"Through that act of yours, my mother's death was hurled at me as a reproach when I came back to my father's house, where I had longed to be again. By that act of yours, you robbed me of my heritage as my father's son. You robbed me of honors that were, should have been, and *are*, mine. You robbed me of the woman I loved, who loved me; aye, and who *loves me still!*"

David looked up with a start.

"Betty!" he said. "She—told you?"

William laughed contemptuously.

"No, she did not, nor did Aaron Bunker. But they *know* I took the *Weasel* and sent it home to my father. They *know* I sent that letter by Lank. They *know* that it fell into your hands and disappeared, and now Betty in her heart and Aaron Bunker in his, *know you for what you are!*"

The rigidity of David melted before that hot blast. His face became almost bloated with emotion. He dropped back into the chair, buried his dark head in his outflung arms upon the table, and sobbed like a child for whom there is no forgiveness except through mercy.

"I did it, William!" he cried miserably. "Heaven help me—I did it!"

But there was no mercy in William's heart—yet.

"It is in keeping with all your acts," he said. "With you all's right and honorable until it is found out. It has been so ever since you were old enough to be a hypocrite and I was old enough to be thrashed for your lies. . . .

"Poor, dear, delicate, darling David!" he snarled, his anger its own fuel until his passion was a white-hot blaze, "who never got his feet wet, who never shot a duck because it was unkind, who crept home with the information that William had said a naughty word!

"High-minded David, who went to Oxford to learn the science of being a man, a scholar and a gentleman—a man who stole his brother's birthright by fooling blind Isaac; a scholar who took pleasure in demonstrating his brother's ignorance to prove his own cleverness; a gentleman whose honor read others' letters and burned them in secret, stole the banners and clouded the merits of a half decent brother who fished him out of the sea like a drowning puppy—aye, and fished out the brave lass whom he also cheated with a lie, and robbed, as he robbed his brother, of her love and happiness!"

"I know—I deserve it all—but——" moaned David.

"You deserve it. Therefore do you get it," interrupted William curtly. "But! Yes—*but*, you say. If you were half a man you would take your deserts without a plea beyond the single word, 'Guilty!' *But!* If you were half a man you would choke over your '*but*' and pay without a murmur as, by Heaven, you shall pay despite all your 'buts' of coward extenuation!"

It is characteristic of one who expects forgiveness upon demand that refusal of it is met with fury. At the hint of coercion David sprang to his feet, his face, still wet

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with tears, working in livid convulsions.

"You threaten!" he shrieked in a sudden hysteria of desperation. "Be careful! Be careful, I tell you! I will not be responsible——"

William took three strides from the door, planted the flat of a broad, brown hand upon his brother's left shoulder and fairly crammed him back into the chair.

"Sit down, you milksop!" he growled. "Be thankful I don't whip you like a dog; but I never hurt a dog in my life. I'd do it this time, but that you are my father's son. Aye, and be thankful I don't drag you to the 'cabin aft' and force confession out of your throat before the Admiral. But for all you do not deserve otherwise, it would hurt him more than it would help me."

"O-oh!" burst from the wretched scholar's heart. "Does *he* know?"

"He does not and for his own sake he never shall, not even to clear myself. And I dare you to tell him!"

David started, stung, but William was not done.

"This you shall do, though. You shall tell him tomorrow that you will not marry Betty Burleigh. Better still, you shall be man enough to swallow your vanity and tell the Admiral that Betty Burleigh will not marry *you!* For Betty is *my* woman! Do you understand that? I love her and she loves me. God and Nature made us for each other, and each other's we shall be if all the world stand between us!"

For five minutes after that not a word was uttered in the room. Once there was a sound of a door being closed quietly. Always there was the irregular sough of convulsive breathing, the reaction of sobbing, and through it all the little bedroom clock on the mantel ticked, like the strokes of fate about to deliver judgment.

At last the scholar moved. With his face averted he groped in a pocket of his coat and brought forth a wallet. From it he extracted a rag of scorched paper and held it out in silence.

When he found that William had left the room, David let the paper flutter to the floor, and again he covered his face in the misery of his degradation.

William, in the meantime, was on the North Road, striding toward Burleigh's Cove. His eyes reflected a light that was not all of the clear stars above him.

Burleigh was laboring with a quill in his hand and a pipe in his mouth when William appeared abruptly before him.

"Burleigh!" said the Admiral's disowned son, without any preliminary. "I want to marry Betty. If she will have me, will you give her to me?"

Burleigh paused in his task of letter-writing. He laid aside the quill and began very deliberately to refill his pipe. When he was ready to light the pipe, he did it with the letter which he had been penning, folding it into a strip and igniting it over the lamp.

"Marry her as soon as you have a mind to, m'lad," said he, between mighty puffs. "She's been waiting for you about ten years, and I've been holding out for you against all comers.

"But," he added with a chuckle, as the last of the letter flared into black ashes between his big rough fingers, "five minutes more and you'd ha' been just that much too late!"

CHAPTER XXI

THE RECKONING

A FEW minutes before noon next day—that memorable July 11th, 1814—a stentorian voice roared through the Admiralty.

"Mizzen and main! The fish-brained, sheep-headed encroacher! David! *William!* I mean——"

There was a quick stop. Then the voice added, more quietly—

"Damme, quartermaster, where is Captain Campbell and my son David?"

William was on the "quarterdeck" when he heard the familiar name spoken by his father. His heart bounded with relief and hope and he hurried to the "cabin aft."

"You called me, sir?" said he.

"I did!" said the Admiral, who was stamping up and down and waving a letter which he promptly thrust under William's nose. "Now, sir! Have the goodness, honesty and decency to tell me what *that* means!"

William took the letter and spread it open, while the Admiral hammered the table with his mallet fist and shouted for David.

"I am here, Admiral," said a quiet voice from the doorway.

David was there, more pallid than ever. and with bluish shadows about his strained eyes and set mouth.

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"Now then!" barked the Admiral. "We are all here. Let's look into this kettle of fish. By thunder! I mean to know who cooked it. Read that letter aloud, Captain Campbell."

William read the letter which came from Burleigh's Cove and was addressed to Admiral Sarvice:

"SIR:

"The delay in your answering my first letter left me believing that the proposition contained in it did not meet with your approval.

"Since then, circumstances have altered the case. I can not now consent to my daughter's marriage with your son, David, because Betty herself has decided to marry Captain William Sarvice, and I have approved her decision. Respectfully,

JOHN BURLEIGH"

William silently handed the letter back to the Admiral, at the same time glancing casually at David. To his surprise, the scholar was smiling, as if in relief.

"Now, in the first place," rumbled the Admiral, "who the deuce is this Captain William *Sarvice?*"

"Merely a slip of John's goosequill," said William lightly. "But I fancy I am the person he refers to. Betty accepted me, and Burleigh approved the acceptance, last night."

"And who gave *you* leave to marry that land thief's daughter?" the Admiral demanded stormily.

He hardly knew what he was saying, or just what he meant to say. Apparently this thing hurt, why he could not have explained to any one, least of all to himself. His son David, it seemed, could marry a land thief's daughter without protest from him, but—but——

"How dare you, sir!" he snorted.

"Admiral Sarvice," said William, steadily meeting his father's eyes, "do the rules of civilized warfare permit a conqueror to interfere with the heart affairs of a prisoner on parole?"

"Possibly not," the Admiral admitted, floundering.

"Then," said William, "may I ask what Captain Campbell is to you that you raise an almost paternal authority over his personal actions?"

The Admiral's face paled and purpled by turns. Once more he was caught in his own net. But he was not going to be entrapped into the admission that William sought.

"I don't care a marlinespike who Captain Campbell is, or what he does," he blustered. "But is Captain Campbell aware that Betty Burleigh is betrothed to my son David?"

"On the contrary, Admiral, I understood that you and Burleigh had not ratified any such agreement. You ought to know that the rules of warfare allow any fair prize may be taken up to the hour when an armistice——"

"Bilge!" cried the Admiral.

"Sir—Admiral—father!" put in David in a strained, nervous voice. "This is my affair. It is for me to speak."

William looked up quickly. What was David going to say? There was an air of decision and determination about the pale scholar, faint and faltering though his utterance might be.

"Certainly!" said the Admiral. "It is your fight. Then fight, damme—fight! Those whom God and Admiral William——"

"Oh, hush, please," the scholar broke in irritably.

"Burst my booms!" the Admiral gasped. David had never interrupted him before with such temerity.

"Forge ahead. Take the deck. I strike my flag. I'll bunk with the cook!"

"All I have to say is this," said David quietly. "I give Betty back any promise she may ever have made to me. If she marries William, she will have made the better man her husband."

"Mizzen and main!" said the Admiral. "I've lost my bearings."

"Not at all, sir. You are finding them again," said David. "We've all been in a fog here.

"Admiral," he continued, while the old man stared, open-mouthed, "when I was at Oxford I was nearly insane once—from study."

"Much learning——" muttered the Admiral, but the context was drowned by David, who continued:

"I was never strong. *You* know that, Admiral. But I wanted mental superiority, if I could not hope ever to have my brother's physical powers."

"What the deuce is he talking about?" said the Admiral, appealing to Captain Campbell.

"I wonder what he *is* going to say?" William asked of himself.

"I wanted to reform the world," the scholar went on dully, his eyes fixed on the wall behind and between the Admiral and William. "I wanted to command the sun

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and possess the moon. I was a fool and I have been more than a fool. I want you both to hear me admit it."

"Good Heavens!" said the Admiral, in a daze.

"I've been a prig all my life. I was a prig until, I think, that day when my brother showed the moral courage that made him fire upon his own father because it was his duty, born of his convictions."

THE Admiral's face was a study. William's gaze was turned anxiously upon his brother. What was David leading up to? Surely not——

"And now," David continued, meeting the Admiral's eyes for the first time since he had entered the room, "I want to tell you of an act of mine which has brought much unhappiness to our family and much injustice upon my brother——"

"Hold on!" interrupted William, his voice touched with sudden compassion. "Don't say any more, David. It is unnecessary."

"Let me alone," said the scholar, his dull gaze moving from his father's face to his brother's. "It is the only way. I agree with you. I must pay—like a man. You can not forgive me. I must earn the right to forgive myself."

The Admiral dropped heavily into his big chair.

"My intellect grows weaker every day," he groaned semi-humorously.

"Admiral," said David, raising his voice slightly, "it was my brother William who captured the *Weasel* and sent it home to you. Also, it was he who stood by to help me when I recaptured it, and he sailed away without a word, but only when my peril was past.

"He saved my life, too, that time off Head Harbor Island. I would have drowned but for him; so would Betty Burleigh have drowned. He saved us both. I lied to you about that accident. I withheld the truth and cheated William of your esteem."

The scholar paused and licked his dry lips. Then he went on—

"Before I put out to chase the *Weasel*, I found on Lank's body a le——"

"Stop!" William cried in a voice that drowned the fatal word.

"I will not!" said David sullenly.

"You shall!" declared William.

"Let me go on," pleaded the scholar. "For my own self-respect—let me go on! Don't you understand? *You* ought to. I want to clean the slate and be a man from now on. I——"

"Wait a moment," William interrupted quickly.

As he spoke a glad light overspread his bronzed face. He took a step nearer his brother and looked steadily into David's eyes. The scholar met the look with an honest pleading that was pathetic. William slowly raised his hand and laid it on his brother's shoulder.

"No, Davie," said he gently. "It's all right. It takes a man and terrific courage to do what you are willing to do. But—don't, please. The intention is enough for me."

The Admiral suddenly awoke to the realization that something was going on outside the circle of his comprehension. He started up in his chair and brought down the wooden fist with a bang.

"By—gad!" said he. "Now I *demand* to know!"

David waved his brother away and opened his mouth to continue his self-humiliation, but before he could utter another word that happy old marplot, Aaron Bunker, threw open the door and stood at salute.

"Sir!" he cried. "I 'ave the honor to report that a British fleet is a-comin' down the Bay an' descendin' upon the American shore!"

"*Glory of Trafalgar!*" roared the Admiral, jumping up.

He rushed out of the "cabin aft" followed by the quartermaster, Captain William and David.

Everything forgotten, they hastened across the lawn to the "quarterdeck," where all the other naval heroes of Welchpool were already assembled in an excited mob.

Off Bald Head appeared what seemed a great fleet of warships. The Admiral at once recognized half of them. The leader was the seventy-four-gun frigate, *Ramillies*, flying an Admiral's pennant. Behind her came the *Martin*, eighteen guns, the *Borer*, fourteen, the *Breame*, eight guns, and the *Terror*, a bombship of eight guns. There were also a number of transports.

The Admiral's excitement and enthusiasm were contagious. He slapped William on the back and demanded answer if the United States could "match that."

"In one sense," said the American privateer humorously, "we have already matched

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it. In another sense, we probably could not."

Now all eyes were turned upon the fleet, which was heading for Moose Island, over which flew the Stars and Stripes. Right off Eastport the British fleet dropped anchor. A boat was lowered from the *Ramillies* and a lieutenant went ashore with an ultimatum.

Major Putnam, who had succeeded Captain Swett at Fort Sullivan, was given five minutes to lower the American flag and surrender the town and island which had been a bugbear to international law makers for so long.

Against such a force, Putnam was helpless. When the flag fell and the transports began to disgorge British troops, the Admiral, whose mind had grown to regard the Anglo-American War as between Campobello on one side and Moose Island on the other, turned to Captain Campbell, his face ablaze with patriotic triumph.

"There!" he cried. "God save the King, and down with the Yankees!"

William turned to his father with a smile, and held out his hand.

"Sir," said he, "permit me to congratulate you."

The Admiral looked at the hand. He had not expected this fine courtesy. It came like a rebuke to his almost brutal crow of triumph.

The old man's face turned fiery red. He shook from head to foot as if some inward struggle were going on within him.

Then a new light slowly dawned upon his rusted, wrought-iron countenance. He suddenly took Captain Campbell's hand in a hard grip, and he blurted out in a voice so loud and full of feeling that all heard and understood that the rock of his pride was broken:

"William, my son! You must ha' got it from your mother. Damme, boy, you're a fairer man than your father!"

CHAPTER XXII

THE LINE IS WIPED OUT

WHEN Admiral Sir Thomas Hardy went ashore to take possession of Eastport, Moose Island, he was met at the beach by an elderly person in a faded Continental uniform.

"Well, sir!" said old John Shackford, at whose elbow stood Samuel Tuttle, Esquire. "What brings you here? I am the King of Moose Island and these are my subjects!"

"I beg to assure you," said Sir Thomas, "that I have called on business and that I shall conduct myself in a manner becoming a gentleman and a King's officer."

"Very well," said Captain Shackford, who had received a warning nudge from Tuttle's fat elbow. "In that case, and on your promise to behave yourself, I dare say we can let you land."

After the preliminaries were settled, the fleet weighed anchor and dropped it again in Welchpool Bay, Campobello. Sir Thomas had already sent word that he proposed to visit the Admiral, under whom both he and Horatio Nelson had sailed in earlier days. The Admiral's reply was characteristic:

Bring the *whole fleet*. And be prepared to tell my people how Nelson died!

And bring the whole fleet Sir Thomas did, while Aaron Bunker, Marvin Patch, Davie Lyon and a host of others were pressed into service as waiters; while half a dozen lads killed and dressed one cow, two sheep, two pigs and twenty chickens, and the women were commanded to bring to the Admiralty all the eggs, turnips, potatoes, etc., that they could lay hands on—honestly wherever possible. The officers of the fleet were to be entertained at an Admiralty banquet, while the crews were to be quartered on the village.

It was perhaps the happiest night in the Admiral's life. The War was over for him when Eastport fell. True, he was blissfully unaware that New Orleans was yet to be written down as a British defeat, but the burning of Washington was also to come as a balm to his patriotic feelings. He was blissfully unaware that after four years of martial law at Eastport, the line of demarcation would be redrawn upon a treaty and that the American flag would go up again over Moose Island, there to remain.

But tonight he was all happiness. It was not only because of the British victory. There was a peace come upon his own house. Once the words were out of his mouth—"my son"—he had stood firmly upon the new ground, which was the old ground, and taken William to his heart, while the islanders cheered them both, there on the old "quarterdeck."

Before the guests arrived, David had a

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private interview with his father, from which both came happier, humbler and wiser men. David's last words at the interview were that William was "a son and a brother any man might be proud to acknowledge."

"I'm glad to hear you say it, Davie," said the Admiral. "Damme, if you'd said it long ago, perhaps—*perhaps*, mark you—I might have agreed with you. Call William and the three of us will drink a bumper of kallibogus. Mizzen and main! Where's that scallywag, Aaron?"

Just as the trio were about to drink the toast, the Admiral put down his mug and struck the table with his wooden fist. A thought had occurred to him.

"Hurricanes!" he shouted. "One of ye's *got* to marry the girl. If David won't do it, then, William, as the elder twin by twenty minutes, *you've* got to!"

"Admiral's orders," said William, saluting humorously.

"And here! Look here!" went on the Admiral in his stormiest fashion, which was often his kindliest. "Send word to Burleigh ——No, I'll write him a dispatch. I'll ask him to dinner with Sir Thomas, damme if I don't!"

He did, too, but big John replied without delay that he was sure he would be in everybody's way and he had a lot of fish-salting to do in the morning, after which he would come and pay his respects, personally, to the Admiral.

He did, too!

IT CERTAINLY was a distinguished gathering at the Admiralty board that night. There were Sir Thomas Hardy, of the *Ramillies*, Captain Senhouse, of the *Martin*, Captain Coote, of the *Borer*, Lieutenant-Colonel Pilkington, of the Marines, and a two dozen others—all officers, gentlemen and good fellows.

"How come your servants to be all lame and halt?" asked Sir Thomas of the Admiral, who sat in belaced, bemedaled glory at the head of the table.

"Every man of 'em maimed in his country's service, sir!" replied the Admiral.

At this tribute to his heroism, Davie Lyon, overcome, dropped a plate of hot mashed turnips on Captain Senhouse's neck. While the Admiral glared and snorted at the late Pauper Roll, William, at the other end of the board, laughed uproariously when he saw that Senhouse himself perceived a ray of humor in the incident.

David Sarvice remained throughout the dinner, but slipped out when the toast-making began.

The Admiral's speech was a jewel. It would be impossible to set it down, for half the merit of the old gentleman's sayings was the old gentleman himself.

One thing he said brought great applause from the guests, although the jest was at their expense. Speaking of the taking of Eastport as a "glorious British victory"—at which even Hardy smiled—the Admiral added—

"*But*—with no desire to detract from your *magnificent achievement*—I assert that at any time I could have taken, or reduced, all Moose Island with the aid of a horse-pistol and Aaron Bunker!"

Speeches followed like volleys from small arms. Sir Thomas Hardy's was peculiarly dramatic.

"My old commander, who sits at the head of this table," said he, "had retired from our active ranks ere that memorable hour in Trafalgar Bay, when the man who, as a mere lad, saluted our Admiral here, died as the greatest naval hero of his race.

"It brought something to my throat and to my eyes this afternoon when Admiral Sarvice's invitation arrived. It was apparent that there were but two thoughts in our dear old friend's venerable head.

"'*Bring the whole fleet,*' and '*be prepared to tell my people how Nelson died!*'"

Then Sir Thomas Hardy told that story which is an epitome of all Anglo-Saxon prowess upon the seas. The only other sound for a while was the ticking of the brass-dialed clock in the hall. The servants, made curious by the comparative silence, gathered around the "messroom" door, and they heard the great story, too.

When Hardy came to that part where he kissed the dying Nelson, every head was bowed except the Admiral's. He was sitting bolt upright, his eyes blazing in his rusted wrought-iron countenance; for had not Nelson been one of "his lads"? He seemed to be thrilled to the very marrow, seeing no tragedy in the epic, only a great glory!

"What upset me," said Captain Coote, of the *Borer*, afterward, "was that old fellow—quartermaster—blubbering in a corner, with a napkin in one hand and a jug of kallibogus in the other."

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IT WAS toward the end of the affair that the Admiral arose to a last toast. It was hard to foresee his point. He spoke a great deal about lines of demarcation, how they applied to human conduct as well as geography. He hoped the day would come when lines would be wiped out between all nations and all individuals. He hoped all men would come to realize, before it was too late, that it would be all the same a hundred years after when they were all under the sod, or fathoms deep.

"There is one American at my table, gentlemen," concluded the Admiral. "He is the only American I ever *loved*. He is here a prisoner of war and, by the cruel fortune of conflict, in his own father's house. But *personal conviction, gentlemen, expects every man to do his duty!*"

Sir Thomas Hardy arose quickly and raised his glass.

"Gentlemen," said he, "to the health of Captain William Sarvice, of the United States Navy!"

"One moment!" cried the Admiral. "My son is on parole. Now, I put a fair question. Has a prisoner on parole the right to wed the fairest lass on my island?"

"Let's see the lass!" shouted the officers. "Where's the lass? The lass!"

William was covered with confusion, while the company stood up, glass in hand, and demanded the immediate production of Betty Burleigh. Perhaps there was some prearrangement about the matter. Anyway, the door opened and in walked Betty, and David was leading her by the hand.

The scholar took her straight to William and, while the officers cheered, he said quietly—

"William, here is Betty!"

The toast was amended to include "the lass," and the acclamation developed into a joyous discord made up of "God Save the King," "Auld Lang Syne," and "Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill."

Amid the merry uproar the Admiral left his place and came to William's side. The happy old man shook hands with his son who was lost and was found again. He kissed Betty who was a pink rose glinting with the dew of a tear.

Then the Admiral shook hands with David, Aaron Bunker, Sir Thomas Hardy, Davie Lyon, Marvin Patch—in fact, with anybody and everybody who fell in his way.

The officers were still filling bumpers, toasting everybody and singing. William looked into Betty's eyes and kissed her cheek.

Then he slowly turned and held out his hand to David.

THE TROPIC LURE

BY MARY CAROLYN DAVIES

UNSEEN the sunsets dim and die;
The night's hot breath is on the south;
The nameless fervid flame-flowers lie,
Red as a woman's mouth.

Again the night waits, passion-tense,
To hold you in its old embrace;
The white stars blaze within the dense
Blue dream of space.

A tortured month, a year, a day—
They haunt you still. And though you know
That Death waits in that land his prey
Which is your soul—yet you will go.

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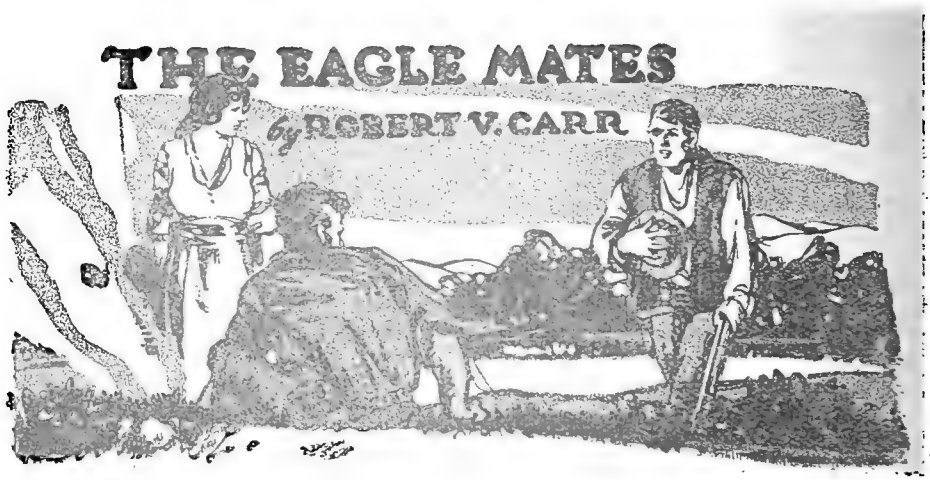

CHAPTER I

PERHAPS that select quartet, Bill Hurley, "Blue Lump" George, "Happy" Jack, and "Limpy" Dick, would not have paused in the town of Night Hawk had not the first-named—their leader—frankly admitted a penchant for the hurdy-gurdy.

"We'll stop for a spell," decided Hurley, as they rode up the main street of the frontier town. "It's been many a long day since I've swung a girl. Anyway the hosses will be better off fer a rest. This is a lively little place I've heard; right up on its hind-legs all night. Hear the music, boys?"

"Better cut your girl-swingin' short," advised Blue Lump George, so named because of a growth on his jaw. "It's a long pull from here to the Short Pines, and I don't know as we got any friends in this man's town. I'm thinkin', too, that the Beemer bunch ain't fur back."

"Oh, we give them turtles the shake long ago," scoffed Hurley. "They couldn't ketch up with a piece of meat on the end of a stick. Git down. I'm goin' to see how a girl's hand in mine feels once ag'in. It's all in a lifetime. Git down, Blue, and shake a leg."

Hurley dismounted, and, closely followed by the grumbling, dubious Blue Lump, with Happy Jack and Limpy forming a reluctant rear-guard, entered the nearest dance-hall where he promptly seized the first girl who approached him, and sailed into the dance.

The three watched their leader for a time, then the reckless, care-free spirit of the place infected them, and they, too, were soon jingling their spurs in the brief dances between the promenades to the bar.

Frequent journeys to the bar, personally conducted by the short-skirted girls, soon caused the Hurley gang to grow prodigal of time, and oblivious to the fact that ten men known as the "Beemer bunch" were following their trail relentlessly.

Having, in a measure, exhausted the delights of the dance-hall, the four sought the Dew Drop Inn where they proceeded to woo the goddess of chance, and to keep a bartender busy bringing them drinks.

The Night Hawkers paid little or no attention to the strangers. The town was wide open and any man had a right to enjoy himself. The Night Hawkers were not in the habit of meddling with the private affairs of recent arrivals.

The four strangers looked no different than numerous other rough men scattered about the saloon. Nearly every man was armed, and the officers of the law were conspicuous by their absence. The law, as interpreted by the Night Hawkers, was not intended to interfere with the securing of money by local talent. Therefore, up to a certain point, the Hurley gang were permitted to woo the aforesaid goddess all undisturbed.

PRIOR to their arrival in Night Hawk the Hurley gang had received a message from another gang operating in an adjacent territory, to the effect that Beemer, their captain, had departed under cover of darkness, taking with him the community loot, two fat money-belts containing the entire savings of the gang.

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Beemer, so the message stated, had lulled them into the belief that when they had secured a certain amount of money he would give each man his portion. Instead he had decamped, and left them "holding the sack," so to speak.

They would greatly appreciate the favor if the Hurley gang would keep a sharp eye open for Beemer. They had not as yet struck the trail of their absconding captain, but they lived in hopes.

Bill Hurley grinned broadly. Beemer, to him, seemed a man of rare intelligence. Still, he would keep an eye open.

It was more by chance than sharp trailing that the Hurley gang stumbled on to the camp of the wary Beemer. They bedded down his suspicions, ate supper with him, and swapped yarns till a late hour. Then, at a signal from Hurley, Blue Lump, Limpy and Happy Jack covered the unfortunate bandit captain with their six-shooters, and Hurley secured the loot. Then they calmly took Beemer into a thicket, and strung him up to a convenient limb. When Beemer had kicked his way into another, and, 'tis hoped, a better world, they pinned a piece of paper on his breast upon which Limpy had scrawled, "h Orse theef," and went their way, fully satisfied with the night's work.

But chance played one more hand in the game, and the gang whose captain had betrayed their confidence, found the suspended horror that had once been Beemer, and readily surmised that the Hurley gang were responsible for that old trick of the border. They had killed and robbed many a man in just that way, passing themselves off as vigilantes. Thus that piece of paper pinned to Beemer's body did not deceive them. They decided to follow Bill Hurley to the gates of Hades and cheat the devil of his own.

Hurley, giving the Beemer gang full credit for possessing a fair amount of common sense, was on his guard, and sighted his pursuers long before they imagined they were within gunshot of him. He decided to seek the Short Pine buttes, three days' ride to the west, and accordingly the four began the long journey.

At times they halted to change horses by the simple procedure of holding up some helpless rancher or unwary homeseeker and robbing him of his stock. This gave them considerable advantage over the pursuers who were thus forced to rely solely upon their own mounts. The pursuers realized that if the Hurley gang once reached the Short Pine buttes, they would be comparatively secure. But there is nothing in the world so bitter as a thief who has been tricked by a thief, and they hung doggedly to the trail.

FORTUNE did not smile upon Bill Hurley and his three assistants. They lost steadily, and finally Hurley began to question the honesty of the faro dealer. The dealer quietly informed him that he was not forced to buck the game.

Then, in a sudden rage, Hurley scooped up some cards from the layout and flung them in the dealer's face.

The dealer was a man of quick and deadly action. Not having a gun handy, he plucked forth an eight-inch bowie and made a lightning slash at Hurley, but failed to slip the steel into the bandit's heart. The point of the knife caught in Hurley's coat, and in that instant he fired. The dealer slid from his chair, and was dead before he struck the floor.

Hurley, as he fired, leaped to his feet and back, swinging his gun. Limpy, Blue Lump and Happy Jack had drawn their weapons and were rushing toward the front door. Hurley followed on the run, and made his exit without injury. But the gamblers, and those who had not fled at the first shot, gaining courage with the hasty exit of the four, crowded out the front door and opened fire on the quartet attempting to mount their horses. Limpy was shot as he started to swing his game leg over the saddle; and, as his body struck the ground, his frightened horse whirled and kicked the last spark of life out of him. Blue Lump received a bullet in his right lung. As they dashed toward the Short Pine buttes, he swayed in his saddle and gave vent to short, bubbling breaths. They had ridden only a few miles when Blue Lump, blubbering, "Don't leave me, boys," fell from his horse.

Happy Jack dismounted and lifted the wounded man up and rested the rolling head against his knee.

"Aw, come on, Jack," growled Hurley. "We can't do nothin' fer Blue. The whole town will be after us. Come on. Old Blue is done fer."

"Go on, if you want to," and there was immeasurable contempt in Happy Jack's voice, "but I'll stick with old Blue. I always thought you a quitter, Bill. Go on,

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and take the stuff. Nothin' makes any odds now. I'm goin' to stick with Blue and try to pull him through."

Hurley looked back through the gloom anxiously. A murderer and a thief, yet he felt some strange stir of admiration for Happy Jack. Not that he would make any such foolish sacrifice, but still he could not help admiring a man who would stick to his wounded partner in the face of certain death.

"I'll see that you git half the stuff," he called back as he rode away.

And so Happy Jack stayed and held Blue Lump George in his arms, and tried to stanch the blood that flowed from the hole in the hairy chest, but all to no avail.

A hastily formed Night Hawk posse surrounded Happy Jack and the helpless Blue Lump, and riddled them with bullets. Then the posse returned to the town, satisfied that they had evened up the score. There they found ten men, upon whom the dust of the trail lay thick, and who seemed greatly disappointed over the fact that one of the four who had caused all the trouble had escaped. They informed the Night Hawk posse that they had a private score to settle with the man who had escaped, and they accurately described Bill Hurley.

The Beemer gang resolved to invade the Short Pine buttes and find Hurley if it took months. They lingered in Night Hawk only long enough to swallow some half-cooked beef, water their horses, and secure some provisions. And the next day they found Bill Hurley.

CHAPTER II

"KID" CALDWELL brooded upon a rocky crest of the Short Pine buttes, bending his somber gaze upon the gray plain that stretched from the lower levels of the buttes to the town of Night Hawk, where a muddy river relieved the drear monotony of sage and cacti and lone cottonwood with long curves and loops of green.

For days the young outlaw had been conscious of a desire to hear the voice of a woman; it smote his heart with a sweet insistency. Ordinarily his mind was purely automatic, registering impressions and making lightning deductions free of ornamental imagery or treacherous sentiment. But now, as Indian Summer trailed her smoky robes across the range, he longed to hear a woman's voice.

True, in the country west of the buttes were many shy Indian maids who would welcome the advances of Eagle-that-never-sleeps, as they had named him, but that thought brought no surcease of the poignant longing; it was the voice of a white woman he yearned to hear.

Yet he knew that many a border cavalier had gone to his death for the smile of a girl; love of woman brought recklessness and a woful lack of caution. What had he, an outlaw whom men longed to slay, to do with soft sentiment and the snares it set for the feet of men? His was a life of eternal watchfulness. He could trust no man implicitly, much less any woman. Yet there was the longing, a desire that made him sigh and shiver.

Suddenly his muscles tensed, and he flung up his powerful field-glasses. The lenses brought into plain view a covered wagon drawn by a span of small black mules. A man trudged by the side of the wagon; a woman occupied the seat.

"A woman," breathed the Kid, as if contemplating a miracle. "A woman—perhaps a girl."

Doubtless the man was a settler in search of land. A few daring spirits were already beginning to penetrate that lonely land. The Kid had been unable to understand the view-point of a settler. It was beyond him just why a man should want to take possession of a little plot of ground, labor with it, toil day after day in the soil. Land! Why, leagues upon leagues of it lay open and unclaimed. About all it was good for was to support game and cattle.

The Kid looked upon civilization with the eyes of a primitive man. Civilization meant penning men up in houses. It meant a curious thing called the law—a thing that he visualized as a prison with armed guards. It meant an interference with personal freedom; under the law men might not settle their disputes with the gun. He, Kid Caldwell, had settled several disputes with the gun, and now that curious thing called the law desired to gain possession of his body, dead or alive.

But no thought of law or civilization now occupied his mind; a woman was nearing the mouth of Elk cañon in the Short Pine buttes, and he would soon meet her face to face, soon hear her voice.

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He arose and glided back to his horse. After a close examination of his weapons, he mounted and rode slowly and cautiously toward Elk cañon. He would appease that longing to hear a woman's voice, but he would not forego caution.

Reaching the shallow stream that brawled down the cañon, he spurred his horse into the current and permitted the animal to quench its thirst. Then he rode into a little shaded glen and dismounted. He removed his spurs and blindfolded his horse. A blindfolded horse is not apt to betray the presence of his master by vain and foolish whinnyings.

A few minutes of cautious progress through the tangle disclosed to the outlaw a telltale spiral of smoke ascending in the still, clear air. The settler had made camp. Making a wide detour the Kid came out on a gravelly bar where, he noted, the settler had watered his mules. From the dragging footprints he deduced that the man was old, and somewhat relaxed his caution. After a careful survey of his surroundings, he parted the willows and glided up a little grassy slope toward the camp.

THE girl was the first to sight the Kid. She gave a little exclamation of surprise and spoke to the man who was puttering with the fire.

The youth vouchsafed a general greeting—"Howdy, strangers."

The settler came toward him, brushing his hands upon his trouser legs.

The Kid noted that the man was beyond middle age, and unarmed.

"I jes' called to say 'howdy'," he said, with a side-glance at the girl.

"That's right," returned the settler heartily. "We're glad to see some one. We're lookin' fer land, and I says to my daughter jes' afore you come that this little place right here suited me. Plenty of wood and water and good black soil. Our name's Fleetwood. This is my daughter, Zony."

The Kid was thankful that the settler had not asked him his name. He was not ashamed of his name, and scorned to travel under false colors. But he felt that if the settler realized he was talking to Kid Caldwell fear would supplant hospitality.

The girl advanced to shake hands with the Kid. With a sibilant intake of breath the youth realized that she was not only young but beautiful. Violet eyes, and thick golden braids; a tender mouth about which a smile lingered—a smile that was to haunt the youth for many a long, restless hour.

"We would be glad to have you stay to dinner," she invited softly, as she gave him her hand.

The Kid did not immediately reply; he was marveling at the exquisite thrill her touch gave him.

"I will be glad to stay," he said finally.

She turned and gave him that age-old side-glance that youth ever accords to youth. The Kid smiled back at her—with his eyes.

She proceeded to assist her father in preparing the simple meal.

As the settler puttered between the wagon and the fire, he told the Kid of his wanderings.

"Zony's mother died when she was a little thing, and we've been driftin' ever since. I had a little money, and jes' kept movin' west. Was raised in a hilly country, and none of that flat land suited me. I swan, it was nothin' but prairie and then more prairie. They told me about these hills back yonder in the town, and I jes' come on out to have a look at them. And this place jes' suits me—plenty of wood and water and black soil. Soon's as I can put up a shack, I'll git back to the town and lay in more supplies. Want a cow, too—and some chickens. Do you suppose there's anybody round these parts has chickens fer sale?"

"Not that I know of," replied the outlaw gravely. "There's plenty of grouse and sage-hens, though."

"How about cows?" queried Fleetwood.

The Kid smiled.

"I guess you can git a cow," he said. "There's one outfit that uses this country fer a Winter range that has two or three thousand. I guess they'll let you have one. If you want beef, though, about all you have to do is to let some rider know, and they'll bring you a quarter."

"No, it ain't beef I want, young feller," laughed the settler, smoothing his scant beard with the back of his hand, "I figgered on gittin' a good milk cow."

"Milk cow?" echoed the outlaw.

"Yes. We want to fix up a home. Cow and chickens, and a garden. I jes' reckon I can homestead this gulch, four forties in a string; that would take in most of the crick."

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"Well, anyway, if you want a cow, I'll git you one," offered the Kid.

The talk of homesteading was as Greek to the youth, but he could understand the need of a cow. The girl drank milk, that was it. He knew that babies required milk, and in some dim fashion he placed the needs of women and children under one head. There were thousands of cows in the country; they were a little wild, but could be tamed He would secure them a cow.

"That's right kind of you," said the settler. "I appreciate your bein' neighborly that way. What do you reckon a good cow would be worth?"

The Kid shook his head.

"Nothin'," he replied simply. "I'll jes' git one and give it to you."

"And I'll churn," broke in the girl delightedly. "And we can have some real bread and butter."

"That's right," agreed the Kid, "you can have some real bread and butter."

"Well now, Zony, I guess everything is ready." The settler looked down at a square of canvas spread upon the ground. The girl had arranged some tin-plates and cups thereon, and was already pouring the coffee. "Set in and make yourself to home, young feller."

A LITTLE reluctantly the Kid leaned his rifle against the wagon-wheel, and squatted turk-fashion on the ground. With considerable difficulty the settler eased his bulk to the ground, grunting and ho-humming. The girl flounced down, spreading her calico skirt over her feet, not omitting to glance demurely at the youth as she did so.

The Kid was about to take up his knife when the settler closed his eyes and began offering thanks. Instinctively the outlaw paused. He could not understand why a man should return thanks to a mysterious being for food he had himself secured, but felt that it was not the part of a visitor to question the acts of his host. The little camp was the settler's home, and therefore sacred.

The Kid took his cue from the girl. She sat motionless, head inclined slightly forward, her little hands folded. The outlaw found himself imitating her.

"Now," said the settler at the conclusion of his little prayer, which the Kid wonderingly noted included a request that the visitor be blessed, "help yourself."

The youth found that he preferred looking at the girl to satisfying his appetite. With that rare intuition that is often so noticeable in primitive men, he refrained from staring at her boldly. Yet he could not resist stealing an occasional glance.

And when his glowing gaze was not turned in her direction, she studied him with the keen eyes of youth. She noted the sheen of his dark brown hair, the sensitive lift to his nostrils, the whiteness of his teeth. She studied the beadwork on his buckskin shirt, and the pearl handles of his revolvers did not escape her notice. Above all she was conscious of the appeal his youth made to her youth.

Already she was planning to enjoy a second visit from him. Then her mind reverted to the conventionalities. What was his name? Where did he live? What did he do?

"You haven't told us your name yet," she said suddenly.

The Kid laid down his fork, and pushed his plate back.

"My name is Caldwell," he quietly informed her. "They call me 'the Kid.'"

He looked up to find the settler staring at him in open-mouthed horror.

"Kid Caldwell," he croaked, "Kid Caldwell, the outlaw!"

The Kid arose and secured his rifle.

Fleetwood was now obsessed with a righteous rage. He could see it all. The girl had attracted the outlaw, and he had hoped to win her confidence by posing as an honest man.

"Git out of my sight!" he raged, struggling to his feet, and waving his arms wildly. "We're honest and God-fearin', and we don't feed murderers and thieves. Git out, I tell you!"

The girl flew to her father's side and made some attempt to restrain him, but he was lost to all reason. He flung her aside, hobbled to the wagon, and jerked forth an ancient shotgun. But ere he could level the weapon the Kid had knocked it from his grasp.

"I don't want to hurt you," the outlaw said soothingly.

As he found himself weaponless the old man's rage suddenly slumped, and he whined helplessly—

"You passed yourself off fer an honest man."

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The Kid shook his head sorrowfully and turned to the girl.

"I don't know what he means by an honest man, but I do know I meant no harm to you folks."

"You'd better go," she said hesitatingly.

The Kid murmured an apology for his intrusion, and with that the settler's rage flamed up anew.

"Go right now!" he stormed. "And don't show up here ag'in."

The Kid could not refrain from smiling. The idea of a clumsy old man ordering him to move on contained an element of humor decidedly amusing. But an appealing glance from the girl made him decide to humor the old man whom, he thought, was probably insane.

"Well, then, good-by," he said to the girl; and whirled and slipped into the shadows of the trees. Yet, when in safe covert, he turned and crept back for a last look at her.

Her father was still raging and gesticulating, but she seemed oblivious to his presence. The Kid noted with an odd sense of satisfaction that her shoulders drooped disconsolately.

"She did not want me to leave," he murmured, as he sought his horse.

CHAPTER III

IN THE seclusion of one of his camps the Kid discovered that he could not forget the girl with the violet eyes. He could forego talking with her, but he longed to see her again. He was conscious of a bitter loneliness.

He even welcomed the advances of a chipmunk, and confided to the saucy animal.

"She was sorry about the way her old man acted. She wasn't afraid of me. She knows I wouldn't hurt her."

He made a pretense of cleaning his already spotless rifle, but invariably his thoughts strayed back to the girl, and he laid the weapon aside. He brooded until the coming of the purple twilight, and then stole through the gloom and picketed his horse in fresh pasture. Supper was not to be thought of; he had no appetite. Perhaps sleep would efface the disturbing memory of those beautiful eyes, those thick golden braids and that tender smile.

He dragged his saddle and blankets into a nearby thicket. Always did he make his bed in a thicket or cave convenient to his camp. He slept, or rather cat-napped, as if in momentary expectation of surprise. Aroused from light slumber by an alien sound, he would gain his feet with the sure instinct of some wild thing, and in an instant be ready and poised for action.

But he found that he could not sleep. He imagined that he could hear her voice in the murmur of the pines. Pictures came to him—pictures that thrilled him with intense happiness. She was wandering by his side in that country far to the west. She was arrayed in soft buckskin garments fashioned for her by his savage friends. She smiled at him the true smile; she was the one being in the world he could trust.

Then he flung aside the soft thoughts. She was a woman, and women could not be trusted. At the best a woman was only a burden that would drag him down to death. He would forget her.

Still, and it was a strangely comforting thought, it would do no harm to see her once more—just once more.

At last he arose and prepared to take the trail. He proposed to slip down to a point near the settler's camp, and wait for the dawn to disclose her moving about the camp in the performance of her simple duties.

It was a moonless night, but he guided his horse with sure precision through the jack-pines and down the winding game-trails.

But, as he rode, reason asked him many sharp questions. Why wait through long hours for the dawn just to look upon her face? Why bother with her at all? Why acquire more disturbing memories?

"I must be gittin' loco," he whispered to his horse.

But nevertheless he sequestered the animal and crept up to within a few yards of the silent camp. He had scarcely settled himself when a horseman rode up from the mouth of the cañon, passed the camp, reined in, and then dismounted and cautiously approached the wagon.

TOM BOYLE, recently elected sheriff of Lariat county, was a secretive, wily man with one ambition, one purpose in life, the killing of Kid Caldwell. This ambition was not due to a sense of duty nor an obsession for enforcing the law, but solely that he might be pointed out by awe-stricken men as the man who killed Kid Caldwell.

The Kid's deeds had been such as to win

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him a reputation for daring far surpassing that of the numerous outlaws who infested the country. He was counted the deadliest shot in all that border-land. He shared his glory with no man, traveling a lone trail.

He had been known to even enter the county-seat in search of a man who had committed a foul murder and laid the crime at his door. The Kid had found his man, and killed him in a fair duel. Then he had departed swiftly.

Thus, to the man who would kill Kid Caldwell, would fall all the glory of that outlaw's deeds, even as in days of old the armor and equipment of vanquished knights became the property of the victors.

For months Boyle had pondered over ways and means to bring about the death of the Kid at his hand. It was useless, he knew, to start out on the outlaw's trail with a large posse. The first sheriff had tried that, and the Kid, by a ruse, had set that officer and his posse afoot. Then the Kid had many friends who would warn him, and the Short Pine buttes offered a thousand safe retreats to the man who knew every tumbled wilderness as a burgher knows his house.

Cunning was the only card to play. He must seek the haunts of the Kid, and depend upon his wit to kill the outlaw without endangering his own scalp. Yes, he would match cunning against cunning, craft against craft. He would take the Kid's trail alone, and would make no loud announcements of his intentions. If he failed, no man would know of his defeat; if he succeeded, he would claim all the glory.

Ere he departed on the trail of the Kid, the sheriff carelessly announced to his lounging deputies that he was about to make a little visit to a friend down the river. He gave them to understand that he might be absent a week or ten days.

Then he packed his saddle-bags with jerked beef; and, with some final instructions to his deputies, mounted and rode down toward the river road. But as soon as he was out of sight of the town, he turned his horse and circled back toward the Short Pine buttes.

BOYLE was not surprised when a covered wagon loomed up in the gloom. He readily surmised that it was the outfit of some landseeker. But he did not propose to disclose his identity until sure that his conclusions were correct.

"Hello there," he called softly.

"What's wanted?" answered a sleepy voice, apparently issuing from under the wagon.

"Whose camp's this?" asked Boyle.

"Fleetwood," replied the old man, crawling out from his bed beneath the wagon. "Who be you?"

The sheriff came up to the old man.

"Are you alone?" he asked.

"Well, no," replied Fleetwood. "My daughter, Zony, is sleepin' in the wagon. What do you want?"

"Don't talk so loud," the officer cautioned. "I'm the sheriff of Lariat county."

"Well," Fleetwood began whining, "I ain't done nothin' you could arrest me fer."

"I'm not after you," Boyle assured him. "Tell me, have you had any—any visitors—since you been here?"

"Yes, we have," returned the old man in an excited whisper. "That murderin' whelp they call Caldwell stopped and ate with us. When he told me his name I drove him out. I'm an honest man, sheriff, and don't want no truck with thieves and murderers."

"So you drove him out," mused the officer. "Drove the Kid out of your camp."

"You can jes' know I did," rasped Fleetwood. "I had an idee, when I found out who he was, that he was hangin' 'round jes' on account of Zony——"

The girl had not gone to sleep as her father had supposed. She had clambered into the wagon, and, without undressing, had lain down to dream of the youth who smiled with his eyes. The soft thump of the hoofs of the sheriff's horse had brought her up to her knees, alert and listening.

She proposed to ascertain the identity of the visitor; and she stepped lightly over the seat and slipped to the ground, and came up to the two men.

"This is my daughter," whispered Fleetwood, for something of the mystery of the night now rendered him fearful.

"Glad to meet you," said the officer, his mind busy with running down the real cause of the Kid's visit to the camp of the settler. At last he concluded that it was the girl who had attracted the youth, and from that point his mind raced to the proposition of using her as a decoy. Undoubtedly, if she attracted the outlaw once, she would attract him again.

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Fleetwood and his daughter were newcomers, and could be easily intimidated. In fact, intimidation would not be necessary; the old man's attitude toward outlaws would make him easily handled. As for the girl, she would not be permitted to interfere with the plan that had leaped to life in his scheming mind.

"I'm here," he announced harshly, and laying a heavy hand on Fleetwood's shoulder, "to arrest a man known as Kid Caldwell. He is a murderer, and I expect you to help me. I'm goin' to take a chance on his comin' here ag'in. I'm goin' to git in that wagon, and wait. If either one of you sight him, you are to apologize fer your treatment of him, and let on like everything was all right. Git him as near the wagon as you can, and, when I tell him to surrender, he'll do it in a hurry. Of course you know that if you don't do as I say, I can take you back to Lariat as helpin' a murderer to dodge the law."

The girl shrank back as the sheriff played his strongest card. She had a fear of the law, and she had not realized that her growing sympathy for the young outlaw might mean prison for herself and father. Yet the sheriff's plan filled her with loathing and disgust for him. She sensed a certain brutality in the man, although she could not distinguish his features, save the black hat across his face that told her he wore a mustache. Still, he was the law, and the law could do no wrong. She bowed her head to what then seemed the inevitable.

"I'll do as you ask," quavered Fleetwood, aghast at the possibility of being imprisoned as an accomplice of an outlaw.

"And the girl—your daughter?"

"Zony is a good girl," said the old man weakly. "She will do as I tell her—she always has."

"Here's the way I'll do," explained the officer, now sure of his ground. "I'll git on my horse, and ride back toward the mouth of the cañon, and hide the 'bronk.' 'Twould never do to have the Kid sight my horse. You and your girl can make your beds on the ground, and act like nothin' had happened. You never can tell who's watchin' in this country.

"If the Kid should happen in and notice my tracks or my horse's tracks, you can tell him that I was a stranger to the country who'd lost his way, and that you put me right as fur as you knew. I'll slip back and crawl in the back end of the wagon. Don't pay no attention to me when I come; jes' lie down and keep quiet. I'll stay in the wagon all day tomorrow if necessary."

"Do you intend to kill him?" asked the girl, speaking for the first time.

"No," replied the officer, considering her woman's nerves, "I jes' want to arrest him. That's why I've fixed it the way I have. I want to git him in such shape so that I can make him give up without a fight. Don't be worried. There won't nothin' happen to scare you. Jes' be friendly to him and you'll be doin' your duty."

"I suppose then," said the girl, "that I might as well get my bedding out of the wagon now."

"Yes," said Boyle. "It won't take me long to hide my horse. You're a game little woman," he added by way of coarse compliment.

She made no reply, but sought the wagon and drew forth the bedding. Yet now in her secret heart was a firm resolve to warn the youth at the first opportunity. Law or no law, he had a right to fair treatment.

She was fearful of the sheriff, but her intuition told her that the youth would not tamely surrender at the officer's bidding. There was a light in the youth's eye that bespoke utter fearlessness. He would probably choose death in preference to prison. Then, if the sheriff captured the youth, the law might place a rope around that young neck.

The sheriff had said that Caldwell was a murderer, but men did not always tell the truth. True, since their entrance into that wild country they had heard many tales of the deeds of the outlaw, but no man had spoken of him with contempt. In fact, she had detected in many men a certain admiration for the Kid.

One little man, who said that his name was "Shorty," had come to their camp near Night Hawk, and told her father a number of tales regarding the Kid. Shorty had declared that the outlaw had never killed a man except in a fair fight, and that he was always considerate of women. Shorty's talk had made little impression on her father, who considered all outlaws beyond the pale, but she had not forgotten the little man's stories.

She resolved to obey the sheriff's instructions and to give no hint of her true state of mind. She would protect her father by seeming to favor the plan, but she

would warn the Kid at the first opportunity.

Then suddenly she asked herself, why was she interested in the young outlaw's welfare? The only answer that she could give to the question was that she could not bear the thought of that long brown hair being dabbled with blood, or that youthful neck being broken, and the thought of that graceful body being loaded with chains was a horror that she could not contemplate. But why? Well, he was so young, and had been so gentle with her.

She was tired of rough men with the eyes of fierce animals. She was tired of her father's quaverings, and set habits. Her youth yearned for the companionship of youth. Yes, she would warn him—warn him at any cost.

The sheriff, having fully impressed the details of the plan upon Fleetwood, turned and sought his horse. But the animal had strayed back among the trees during the confab, and the officer experienced some difficulty in immediately locating his mount.

THE sheriff never knew how it happened. He had heard no sound, and yet there was the cold muzzle of a gun pressed against the back of his head.

"Hands up!" came the chilling order. "Don't move, and keep still."

And the officer knew that deadly, menacing voice could issue from no other lips save Caldwell's.

Boyle had left his rifle on the saddle. In a breath a deft hand had plucked his six-shooter from the holster, and he was disarmed and helpless.

The Kid felt the officer over for other weapons, and found a pair of handcuffs in the sheriff's hip-pocket. That particular pair of handcuffs were the first Boyle, or, for that matter, any officer in that country, had possessed. He was particularly taken with them. He had had no idea of ever placing them on the Kid's slim wrists, but he brought them along just the same. He felt that they were, next to the star pinned on the inside of his vest, most truly emblematic of his office. The Kid found the star, too, and smiled as he felt the points.

"Put your arms around that tree in front of you," ordered the outlaw."

The sheriff was desperate, and considered a hundred tricks that might give him liberty, but his mind always reverted to the cold fact that the Kid was a dead shot. Thus he obeyed orders, and embraced the tree; and the Kid, discarding his rifle and drawing the handier six-shooter, snapped the handcuffs upon Boyle's wrists.

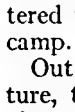
Perhaps there is nothing in the world more helpless than a man handcuffed to a sturdy tree. The Kid pondered for a moment, searched Boyle once more, and found the little handcuff-key in the officer's vest-pocket; and then feeling assured that the sheriff would not annoy him for a time at least, he glided back in the direction of the wagon. He was determined to satisfy that longing to look once more upon the face of the girl.

This time he approached the camp from the rear, noting that the girl and her father had made their beds between the wagon and what he recalled was the point where the settler had started his camp-fire. He could distinguish two vague forms on the ground. He had no accurate knowledge of the sheriff's plan, but he knew that Boyle was intent on killing him, and that that low-voiced consultation with the settler had not been friendly gossip.

The old man had childishly insisted on dragging his bed out from under the wagon. The girl had not approved of that move, for the reason that she had a wild hope that the outlaw was hovering around the camp—in some mysterious fashion she thought she sensed his presence—and she wanted to be alone that she might warn him before her father glimpsed him. But the old man insisted on sleeping near her, and she knew him too well to argue the point.

The Kid was now not over twenty feet from the rear of the wagon, crouching behind a clump of bushes. Suddenly he raised up slightly and listened intently. His keen ears told him that a rider had entered the cañon and was approaching the camp.

Out of sheer daring and love of adventure, the outlaw bounded from his hiding-place, and, flinging back the canvas curtain, leaped into the wagon. He crouched down and awaited the entrance of the rider who might be a friend, or, more likely, one of Boyle's deputies.



BILL HURLEY rode into the camp with little display of caution. He found Fleetwood and the girl on their feet, and wasted no time with ceremony.

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"Settlers?" he growled impatiently.

"Yes," quavered the old man, wondering what new trial the night would bring forth.

Hurley dismounted and advanced on Fleetwood with menacing gun.

"Git me something to eat. Move quick!"

"All right, all right," whimpered the old man. "Give me time. I can't do it in a minute. Give me time."

Hurley seized the girl and flung her against the wagon-wheel.

"Git in there and rustle out the grub," he snarled.

Although he realized that he was confronting a desperate and brutal man, Fleetwood found courage to resent the intruder's rough treatment of his daughter.

"You mustn't touch her," he chattered, "you mustn't——"

Hurley had ridden far and fast, his gang had been wiped out, he had consumed a great quantity of bad whisky, and he was in no mood to brook opposition. He whirled and struck Fleetwood with the barrel of his six-shooter, and the old man dropped like a sack of meal.

Helpless with fright, the girl clung to the wagon-wheel, making no move to secure the provisions.

Hurley, with that madness that comes to brutal men when dealing with the helpless, jerked her back from the wheel and shook her savagely.

"Do you want to die? No. Well, hop up in that wagon and git me some grub. I ain't got all night to wait."

He flung her back against the wheel, and she slowly clambered into the wagon. As she stepped down back of the seat, a hand found her hand and conveyed it to—a smooth face! Then her fingers touched a long strand of hair, and she knew that in some mysterious fashion Kid Caldwell had supplanted the sheriff.

"Git a move on you," snarled Hurley.

"Yes," responded the girl faintly, as the Kid pushed her back of him.

Impatiently Hurley stepped upon the hub and drew up a leg to rest his knee on the seat. She was taking entirely too much time, and he would hurry her.

As his knee touched the seat there came a withering blast of rifle flame that seemed to lift him and hurl him to the ground. The Kid leaped lightly from the wagon and examined his handiwork, and pronounced it good. Then he assisted the girl to the side of her father.

"He's dead," she gasped.

The youth made a hasty examination of the prostrate settler.

"He's all right," he assured her. "Jes a welt on the head. Throw some water in his face. It's comin' daylight now, and I can fix up his head. Don't think he's hurt bad."

The girl picked up a battered tin bucket and splashed some water in her father's face. The Kid then dropped down on his knees and rubbed the old man's hands briskly, and worked his arms back and forth.

Presently Fleetwood groaned and attempted to sit up.

"Where am I?" he quavered. "Is that you, Zony? What?"

"You're all right," the Kid assured him. "You got a good belt on the head, that's all."

It was now growing gray in the east, and the old man could see the features of the youth who was evidently doing all in his power to aid and comfort him.

"Why—where's the sheriff," he mumbled. "I thought——"

"Sheriff's all right," the Kid carelessly informed him. Then with unconscious humor— "Guess he got tired of waitin' and went home."

At last the old man's mind cleared up sufficiently for him to comprehend that Kid Caldwell held him in his power, and that the outlaw knew he had plotted with the sheriff.

"What are you goin' to do with me?" he asked as Zona and the youth assisted him to his feet. Then he saw the body of Hurley sprawled across the wagon-tongue. "Why —what done that—that?"

"He was rough with the girl, and I dropped him," the Kid briefly informed him. "Don't know who he is, but that don't matter now. Said he was in a hurry. Prob'ly some bunch after him."

"I guess we'd better be gittin' out of here, Zony," whined the old man. "This is a horrible place. Nothin' but shootin' and killin', and schemin' and plannin' to take life."

"How's your head feel by this time?" asked the Kid kindly.

"Terrible, terrible," groaned Fleetwood.

"I tell you what you might do," suggested the Kid, with a glance at the girl.

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"You might break camp and come with me, and rest up fer a spell. I know of a good camp where you won't be bothered. Then, when you're feelin' good, you can drift back to where there's people. It's kind of hard fer newcomers to git along here—not knowin' the country."

"But consarn it, you're an outlaw," sniffled Fleetwood. "I drove you out once. How do I know but what you are settin' a trap fer me?"

"Oh, father," cried the girl angrily, "don't be a fool. This—this young man has helped you. He saved me from that—" and she shuddered as she glanced at the body a-sprawl across the wagon-tongue—"and I see no reason why you shouldn't take his advice. He knows this country, and I think you have little to do to think of what he may or may not have done. He has been good to us—and you know it."

The blow that Fleetwood had received from Bill Hurley had knocked, apparently, some common sense into him, and he suddenly surrendered to youth.

"What can I do," he quavered weakly, "with my own daughter agin me?"

The Kid smiled.

"Do jes' as you want, but I'll be glad to help you."

"What shall we do first?" asked the girl, now looking on the Kid as her protector.

"That depends on what you think you want to do. If you're goin' back to Night Hawk, then you'll want to keep your outfit. If not—" and he looked at it intently—"you won't need the mules nor the wagon."

"Why, I couldn't give up them mules," objected Fleetwood, gingerly caressing the welt on his head. "They cost me a heap of money."

The girl stamped her foot impatiently.

"Daddy, please hush. We'll do what is best, and I do wish you would not be so afraid that some one is going to rob you."

"Whatever you want to do," went on the Kid, "I'll try and help. Jes' tell me, that's all."

"I think," decided the girl, ignoring her father's quavering objections, "that, if you will show us another camp, we had best go with you. After a few days we can go back to Night Hawk. I think daddy is about ready to give up his idea of settling down here."

No reference was made to Sheriff Boyle by either the girl or her father. She felt some reluctancy in telling the outlaw that she had planned to warn him, and the old man was now somewhat ashamed of his agreement with the officer. He had blurted out, "Where's the sheriff?" as he regained consciousness; but now, in the light of recent events, he felt that the less said about the sheriff the better.

"Here is what we can do," the Kid said to Zona. "I'll take you to a good safe camp. You can stay there as long as you like. I got a little friend—Shorty——"

"Little man with a big mustache?" she interrupted.

"Yes."

"Why, he talked with us in Night Hawk."

"Uh-huh. Well, Shorty will be out here in a few days and guide you back to town. Is that all right?"

"Yes. And I hope you won't think daddy don't like you."

"I like the young feller all right, Zony," broke in the old man, "but somehow I got a hold of the wrong idee. I guess you're right, Zony. What concerns us is whether he treats us right. And I guess he's done that. Go ahead and do what you want. That crack on the head that villyun give me has jes' mighty nigh sickened me—mighty nigh sickened me."

AND so the Fleetwoods, guided by Kid Caldwell, broke camp and moved slowly up the cañon. They passed the sheriff's horse, and the Kid calmly tied the animal to the wagon beside the horse that had brought Bill Hurley to his death. They did not see the manacled officer.

"Go on," he told the girl who was driving. "I'll catch up with you in a little while," he added, offering no explanation.

The Kid returned to the sheriff and released him by unlocking one handcuff.

"You can keep that other cuff on, Boyle, to remember me by," he said with a somber smile. "Drift!"

And, Boyle, utterly crestfallen and thankful to escape with his life, lurched off down the cañon to later narrowly escape meeting the Beemer gang.

The Kid rode back up the cañon over a cut-off. The trail that would bring him in ahead of the slow-moving mules led up and along the cañon side for some distance, and from its highest point he glanced back at the mouth of the cañon.

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He saw the Beemer gang as they entered the cañon hard on the trail of Hurley. He was suspicious of armed and fast-riding men, and he had no means of knowing, if those distant riders caught up with the settler, whether they would accord him and his daughter fair treatment or not. He resolved to take no chances, and recklessly galloped his horse down the trail, crossed the stream and rode up even with the girl.

"Pull in, quick," he ordered sharply. "There's a big bunch down at the mouth of the cañon. I do not know what or who they be, but we can't take no chances."

"What will we do?" cried the girl, now thoroughly alarmed.

"Leave the mules and wagon, and git on the hosses. Move quick."

The old man attempted to remonstrate, blubbering something about his mules, but the Kid pulled him down from the seat and fairly threw him on the sheriff's horse. Then he helped the girl on the Hurley horse; and in a moment they were speeding up the cañon over trails and through hidden passes known only to the youth.

They dropped over into another cañon, followed the stream for some distance, and then came to a natural tunnel into which the Kid rode boldly. The tunnel opened out on a shelf of limestone that overlooked still another cañon.

The Kid led them along that narrow shelf until it struck the sloping floor of the cañon. And then, through jackpine thickets, and over devious, winding trails made by deer and mountain-sheep, he guided them to his main camp. This was reached by a trail so narrow and dangerous that the girl was fearful her blundering old father would grow dizzy and fall from his horse.

They steadily ascended to a point of rocks that seemed to bar further progress; but, when they reached the apparent barrier, they found that the trail widened and curved around it, and led into a little basin where the grass was yet green and luxuriant.

A spring-fed rivulet slipped along through the center of the basin and over the lip of a sheer cliff of limestone to merge its waters with those of the stream that brawled down the cañon.

It was an aerie, high, dry and safe, and to his retreat the Kid welcomed the weary old man and the wondering girl, with quaint apologies for its lack of civilized equipment.

"Haven't much here, but what there is you're welcome to."

And he led them to a great cavern he called his home, and bade them make themselves comfortable.

THE Beemer gang found the body of Bill Hurley, but with the two money-belts missing. The Kid had thoughtfully appropriated them.

The wagon-trail was plain, and the gang again took up the pursuit of that most elusive loot. They found the wagon and mercifully unhitched the mules, and attempted to locate the trail of the horses that had apparently been tied to the wagon. But, after futile dodgings through the tangle, and many blunders, they gave up in despair and slowly returned to the mouth of the cañon where they went into camp.

The Hurley gang was wiped out, and that afforded them some consolation. The next day they headed back to their home range.

CHAPTER IV

THE Fleetwoods had spent an uneventful week in the retreat of Kid Caldwell. The old man, the welt on his head reduced to a discoloration that gave him little pain, found it very pleasant to sit in the sunshine and eat venison.

He had now completely changed his opinions regarding the Kid. Outlaws were not to be tolerated—that is, most outlaws. But when an outlaw gives you the softest robes and the tenderest meat and is always considerate and kind——

"It's jes' this way," the old man told a red squirrel perched on a nearby boulder. "The Kid didn't know no better; he never had no raisin'. I was wrong to judge—yes siree, wrong to judge. 'Judge not lest ye be judged' is what I should have thought of.

"Here's a scrap o' meat, you little varmint. Don't care fer meat, hey? Well, as I was sayin', 'Judge not lest ye be judged.' We've been here a week, and that boy ain't done nothin' but wait on me hand and foot. Fixed my head up with an Injun poultice, give me the finest bed in the camp, and has treated me better than a son—better than a son would treat me. Sure he killed men—killed that villyun that struck me down, and saved Zony from him. Set the sheriff afoot, too. I shouldn't have had no truck with that sheriff. He was a hound dawg.

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If he wanted to arrest the boy, he should have tackled him fair.

"I wonder where them youngsters be now? They've been skylarkin' around ever since we come. Well, I ain't nothin' to say. Zony is a changed girl—don't mind me no more than nothin'. I swan, I never knew that she was a grown woman till jes' these last few days."

Silence, and then:

"I never see Zony so happy. She don't seem to want to go back to the town. Ask her about it, and she jes' looks at me and smiles. What can I do? I'm gettin' old, and they're both agin me in a way. But I'll say this much fer Zony's mother: if I'd 'a' been a murderer ten times over, she'd stayed by me—and Zony's like her maw."

The old man bowed his head and became lost in fine dreams of his youth.

AS FOR the Kid and Zona, they had climbed up through a crevice in the back of the cavern, and had found an ideal lounging-place on a bed of kinnikinic. Their eyes swept a hazy panorama of limestone battlements, green parks, and glinting streams.

"Shorty will be here tomorrow," the Kid was saying, "and then you can go back to where there's folks."

She made no comment.

"I've tried to make things easy fer you," continued the youth. "I hope you won't look back on the time you've been in my camp as a rough deal. If you was goin' to stay a little longer, I'd git you a buckskin dress. I know a squaw over in the Three Falls country that makes the finest buckskin clothes you could want. All covered over with elk teeth——"

"I would like that," she interrupted. "As for you doing things for me, I think you have done more than your share. I do not care so much for the town as you think. I like to live this way. Daddy and I have been on the move so much that I do not mind camp-life; I am afraid I would not care to live in a house."

The Kid did not look at her. He sat gazing at the matchless picture spread out below him.

"But Shorty will be here tomorrow. You will then——"

"Do you want us to leave?"

Her question forced the Kid to turn his head. A long brown lock fell across his cheek, and she reached over and brushed it back. As if startled at her daring, she drew away from him.

"No, I do not want you to go back. I want you to stay—fer a long time. But I see no trail out."

"I do not understand what you mean?"

"I mean—I mean," faltered the Kid, "that I want you to stay here because it will be lonesome when you are gone."

The girl laughed lightly.

"You will soon get over feeling lonesome," she said, toying with her thick braids.

"No I won't," he insisted. "Here, every day, we've been trailin' around over this country, and I've learned you a lot of things. You don't suppose that when you are gone, and I start out after a deer, I won't miss you bein' with me?"

"I'll miss you, too," she confessed childishly.

The old dream came to the Kid. They would go to that country west of the buttes, she would dress in soft buckskin, and he knew where there was placer gold—gold that would vie with the gold of her hair.

"Do you like me?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes." And now she faced him, and leaned toward him until she could see her smiling features reflected in his eyes.

"I don't mean that," the Kid corrected himself impatiently. "I mean do you—well, would you care to stay here or in some other place with me."

"I like you well enough to stay with you always," she said calmly, as if she had considered the matter for ages. "I do not care what you have done. All I know is that I do not want to leave you. I know that you will treat me fair."

That was entirely too much for Kid Caldwell. He flung his rifle aside and leaped to his feet. Then he reached down and helped her to her feet. His arms slipped about her naturally.

"I wish," he murmured close to her ear, "that you'd kiss me like I've often dreamed of a girl kissin' the man she loves."

"Why, you poor boy," she said, a hint of tears in her voice; and kissed him a little blunderingly, for she too had had little experience in the tender arts of love.

"There is a priest who lives with the Indians," began the Kid, after he had examined her golden braids and her little ears to his heart's content, and kissed her perhaps a dozen times.

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"I do not care," she laughed. "He could not make me think more of you. But, if you want, we will go to him."

Then the youth gently released her and picked up his rifle. Clasping her hand, he turned and faced the west.

"We'll go over there," he said solemnly, "you and your father and me. It will be a new deal. There's a heap you can teach me, girl—and I'm willin' to learn. Your ways will be my ways."

He drew a deep breath.

"I never knew what it all meant before. Had you not come, there wouldn't have been anything worth livin' fer."

For a time they stared into the west, immobile and fixed.

"I'm happy," she said softly, as if loth to break the spell that hung over hill and vale.

And then, hand-in-hand, they returned to the old man by the fire.

COME-ON CHARLEY INVESTS

by THOMAS ADDISON

Score: $840,000

IT WAS one of those lovely February nights in New York when you make up your mind to take out an accident policy the first thing in the morning. At nine o'clock it was clear as a bell, with a gentle breeze from the west, bearing on its wings faint tidings from Weehawken, Secaucus, and other perfumed points in Jersey.

At ten-thirty the wind shifted sharp to Yonkers, and then, realizing its mistake no doubt, shrieked down from that tame, torpid town as if in a tearing hurry to get away from it.

It was crying rain—the wind—as it whooped along, a cold, needle-like rain that froze hard as it fell and made a dirty mirror of the streets, treacherous to the

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Editorial Note—*Samuel Drew*, a New York lawyer with a $10,000 bequest for Charles Arthur Carter ("Come-On Charley"), a clerk in a small New Jersey town, yields to a whimsical impulse (and other things), and tells *Come-On* this money is only the advance payment on a $2,000,000 bequest to come to him if he makes the $10,000 grow to $1,000,000. (Wants to see what a man can accomplish with just the *reputation* of having $2,000,000.) *Come-On* accepts the news placidly, moves to the Hotel Rirebien in New York, and becomes target for all the "con" men. Good-natured, easily approachable, yet somehow he always emerges winner instead of loser. Not such a fool as he seems, quick to learn from experience, doing very little talking, he adds a little each time to his original $10,000. *Percival Teeters*, his light-headed and slangy secretary; *Ball*, his newspaper friend; *Joe Link*, his boxing-instructor; and *Drew*, the lawyer, generally figure in his adventures.

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foot as a waxed floor to a Wallabout widow.

Mr. Teeters surveyed the scene in dismay as he and Mr. Carter made their way, step by step with the crowd, down the lobby of the Allrott Theater, where a long deferred success was nightly packing the house.

"Merry Moses!" he exclaimed. "We got to skate across to Chatty's eat-shop, Come-On, if it's there you're going. We oughter had the car come for us. I told you——"

Charley cut him short by the simple expedient of thrusting his elbow into Mr. Teeters' floating-ribs.

"Stow it!" he admonished in a tone the secretary recognized as final.

A man in a flashy business suit touched off with an ensanguined bow-tie glanced at them and pushed on to the street. Just in front of Charley was a wondrously pretty girl who had half turned her head at Mr. Teeter's querulous plaint, and had as quickly turned it away on catching Charley's eye. There was a dimple in the corner of her mouth, born of a smothered smile, and it was this that was responsible for the sudden and painful compression of Mr. Teeters' costal appendages. Mr. Carter did not relish being made conspicuous in the sight of this young and dainty beauty.

When they reached the street the girl shrank back from glassy pavement and roaring gale into the shelter of the doorway, again. Her companion, an elderly man, said something to her and started for a limousine which was next in line to the car directly abreast of the entrance.

Possibly he was going for an umbrella, or an additional wrap, but whatever his errand it was a grotesque failure. He teetered three steps toward the curb, slipped half a dozen more, then lurched to leeward and sailed helplessly past his machine to the second one behind it where he brought up flat-seated on the running-board, a picture of dismantled dignity and droll despair.

In the meantime Charley and the girl were doing a wholly impromptu sketch of their own. The girl had uttered a little scream when she witnessed her elderly companion's antics on the ice. Then with one of those amazing feminine impulses—as easily to be accounted for as the spots on the sun—she darted forward to save him from a fall. Charley darted after her. As her feet went out from under her, as he knew they would, he caught her in his arms and, with the momentum gained, slid with her straight as an arrow to the door of her own machine.

Charley helped her in. A bunch of violets fell from her corsage crushed and mangled to the floor. Charley remembered it later, and the perfume of them seemed all about him for hours after. Just then they were too much occupied with each other to think of trifling details. Both were a little breathless and the maid was rosy red. Charley was more than that—his face was a conflagration. The older man by this time had managed to crawl up to them.

"By Jove, sir," he gasped, "I am in your debt. That was well done!"

"Wasn't it, Papa!" cried the girl. She put out her hand to Charley with a charming gesture. "You saved me from a nasty fall. Thank you—so very much!"

"Nothing at all," stammered Charley. "Pleasure. Wish I could do it over again."

He blurted this out in a manner so absolutely artless and sincere, and with a face so crimsoned with confusion, that the man after a quick survey of him laughed and said—

"May we not set you down somewhere, in partial payment of my daughter's debt?"

"Much obliged," Charley answered. "Only going across the street."

Impatient cries to move on were being hurled at them, and the man, with a kindly tap on Charley's shoulder, stepped into the car.

"My name is George Francis Grant," he mentioned. "We may meet again some day."

The girl leaned forward expectantly, but Charley's wits were thick as wool just then. The door closed before he thought to give his name in return. The girl looked back as they drove off, and the smile she flashed at him left Charley a ruin where he stood, his head bared to the pelting storm and his heart hammering in his ears.

WHEN he came-to fully, Mr. Carter found himself mechanically feeding on a lobster *soufflé*, at Chatty's, with Mr. Teeters goggling at him from across the table. And, as it happened, the man in the loud clothes and blood-red tie who had crowded by them at the theater

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was sitting alone at a neighboring table, giving them an occasional curious glance.

"Jimmy Crips, Come-On!" ejaculated Mr. Teeters. "That girl must have put the jinx on you. You ain't heard a word I been saying."

Charley raised his head and contemplated his secretary with a frown. Then he said:

"Write it down. Read it to me in the morning." And he added, "Got enough of this. Tired. Going home."

He pushed his plate away and beckoned to the waiter. The man at the next table who, it seemed, had paid his check in advance, rose and sauntered into the adjoining room.

"Gollamighty, Come-On," quarreled Mr. Teeters, "we got something more coming to us—a baked Alaska, and——"

"Tooth-ache," said Charley shortly. "Ear-ache, too. Shut up!"

Mr. Teeters, to whom his chief was revealing himself in a totally unaccustomed light, wiggled his moustache and stared, but wisely refrained from further speech. Nevertheless he was worried. Perhaps Charley was coming down with some kind of sickness—a fever maybe or one of those quick things that carry you off before you know it. Mr. Teeters little suspected his friend was in the initial stages of a malady as commom as malaria and infinitely easier of cure. And so he trailed after Charley to the door in a stew of direful forebodings.

A SHALLOW canopy of agate-glass extends along the front of Chatty's, affording some slight shelter from the weather. Charley paused under this to inspect the line of cabs at the curb, and as he did so a woman's voice came to him pleadingly:

"Oh! Won't you please protect me from this man!"

Charley veered sharply to the right. The fellow with the red necktie was standing under the canopy at the other door of the restaurant talking rapidly to a slim, tall girl who was shrinking from him with outflung, warding hands. The freezing rain beat upon her, and the wind whipped her skirts about her knees until she was imprisoned in them beyond the power to flee.

"Please!" she cried again.

Charley sprang forward and Mr. Teeters, with a yelp, followed. Chatty had seen to it that his walk was sprinkled deep with sand. The footing was secure. But it was quite as good for the man as for Charley, and he made his escape around the corner without a fall. There was no fight in the creature, apparently.

"Sorry I couldn't nail him," said Charley, when he returned to the girl. "Brute."

"Oh! I was so frightened!" panted the young woman. "I was caught in the storm and was trying to get home. It was hard going. I fell twice. I stopped here to catch my breath and—and he spoke to me."

Charley looked at her closely. She, too, was pretty, but of a different type from the other—that other! This girl was dark of hair and eyes, and the other—her hair was gold, her eyes were amethyst, and her voice was soft as the trill of drowsy birds! She was like a fairy princess in her wraps of fur, while this one—she was just a girl! You could find her in dozens—hundreds—in the big office-buildings down-town. There were millions like her everywhere. But Charley said to her gravely:

"Oughtn't to try to walk. Going to get you a cab."

The girl dropped her eyes.

"I haven't any money," she confessed. "It's not far. I came out on an—an errand just before it began to storm, and I waited, hoping it would stop."

Charley signaled to a cab.

"You're going to ride," he said to her firmly. "Pleasure to be of service. All brothers and sisters when in trouble."

He pressed a bill into her hand and, taking her by the arm, led her to the cab. Mr. Teeters stood back and watched them. She made only a feeble resistance to Charley's summary disposal of her.

"I will return the money," she told him as he placed her in the taxi. "I would like your name and address, please."

Charley demurred, but she insisted—imperiously now—and he gave it to her.

"Where to?" he asked.

She hesitated.

"West Thirty-eighth Street. I will give the man the number." She put out her hand, like that other girl and yet so unlike! "I thank you more than I can say," she faltered prettily. "Perhaps I can do you a favor some day. Who knows? Good-by."

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She drove away. Charley and Mr. Teeters took a cab themselves.

"Hully gee!" exploded the secretary, unable longer to contain himself. "It's raining girls tonight, Come-On!"

Charley made no answer. He was pulling absently at a perfecto in his corner of the seat. When they reached the Hotel Rirebien he requested Mr. Teeters to wait for him at the elevator, and marched over to the desk. To the clerk he said, without preamble of any kind:

"George Francis Grant. Medium height. Middle-aged. Gray hair. Handsome. Know about him?"

The clerk smiled.

"Just a little. Plutocrat, yachtsman, all-around good sport. And say, he's got a daughter—Dorothy—who is some peach! They print her picture in the Sunday papers every time she gets engaged."

"Thanks," said Charley soberly.

He consulted a telephone directory, made a note from it, and went upstairs and to bed.

II

IT WAS after lunch the next day, Tuesday. Charley was lounging in his sitting-room when a special-delivery letter came for him. The envelope bore the imprint of the Marvel Machine Company, Olympic Building, William Street, New York. Mr. Teeters, in his capacity of private secretary, was wont to open his chief's mail. It consisted mostly of screeds from professional beggars and the like, and they bored Charley to extinction. Mr. Teeters usually destroyed them without comment. This letter, though, was different. When he opened it a two-dollar bill dropped out.

"Ha!" he yapped. "Who's this subscribing for our new church organ?"

Charley showed interest. A night's sleep and two good meals had checked his malady. He wasn't cured, but his condition was improved. He was helped a little also by the remembrance of what the clerk down-stairs had said. Dorothy Grant was a flirt, or she wouldn't have been engaged so many times.

"It's that girl you sent home in a crate from Chatty's," went on Mr. Teeters. "She's fired the label back."

"Read what she says," commanded Charley.

Mr. Teeters did so, spreading out on the table a letter-sheet with a severely plain but embossed heading.

"Dear Mr. Carter:

"Thank you again. I know now who you are of course, for I read the papers. I am wondering if I can not do you a favor in return for yours. I am private secretary to Mr. Barlow, treasurer of this company. They are going to enlarge the business. There is a wonderful chance for investment. Perhaps you might care to look into it. If so, call me up before five today and, if I can, I will make an appointment for tomorrow. The time is short.

"Sincerely yours,"

There was a postscript—there always is when a woman writes. Mr. Teeters declaimed it with tremendous satisfaction.

"P. S.—Was it Mr. Percival Teeters who was with you last night—the tall, distinguished looking man? I have read about him too."

"Made a hit," Charley said to his secretary with perfect gravity. "How do you do it, Skeeters?"

Mr. Skeeters got up and deliberately surveyed himself in the mirror between the windows. He combed his drooping auburn mustache with his fingers and let his pale blue eyes wander over his amazing cutaway of Florida-green cassimere picked out with magenta stripes.

"Blessed if I know," he replied with a rakish air. "It's always been that way. I can't help it. What say, Come-On, to calling up that wren? Won't do any harm to find out what she's got baking in the oven. It may be good enough to eat."

Charley said nothing, and Mr. Teeters pursued the tenor of his thoughts.

"We ain't been stirring around much lately. Since the con men stubbed their toes on us and found we was full of lead there ain't been nothing doing. It's been dull as an old ladies' picnic down in the wood-lot back of the barn. If this little Jenny-Jane can tip you off to a piece of pie that's got something real between the lids, why not take a bite? Hey?"

Mr. Teeters, perceiving he had Charley going, played a clincher.

"And there's your Uncle William's money. You got $840,000 salted in the bank, but you got to swell it to a million, old Drew says, before you can hook on to Uncle Billy's wad. Maybe here's your chance—a real business—Marvel Machine Company. Gosh, I wish I had a bale of hay as big as yours!"

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Charley broke his silence at last.

"All right. Call her up. No harm to talk it over."

AND so it came to pass that the next day at one o'clock, by appointment, Mr. Carter's French limousine—a Peugeot—stood before the Olympic Building in William Street, while Mr. Carter and Mr. Teeters went up to the tenth floor to the offices of the Marvel Machine Company.

Miss Harding received them in an outer room. She was looking trim and pretty in a neat gray suit with something fluffy about the neck. Mr. Teeters ogled her in his most destructive manner, but aside from one swift, fluttering glance at him, she gave no evidence of the burning gaze he fixed upon her. She was cordial, yet all business.

"I have spoken to Mr. Barlow about you," she said to Charley. "He was rather put out at first—he has his own way of doing things—but he has consented to see you."

Charley looked at the ground-glass door to the next room. It was inscribed chastely in gold with the gentleman's name and title.

J. A. BARLOW, Treasurer

"Much obliged to him," said Charley. "Shall we go in?"

"Not yet," smiled the girl. "Mr. Vanderfelt is with him. You know—the Real Estate King." She hesitated, and added: "They have been having a stormy session in there. Mr. Vanderfelt wishes to buy the controlling interest in our company, and Mr. Barlow won't listen to it. But write your name on this pad please—your full name. I will take it in as soon as Mr. Barlow is disengaged."

"Give you a card," offered Charley, feeling for his case. But the girl stopped him.

"No, not that; the pad, please." She laughed lightly. "Mr. Barlow rather prides himself on reading character in handwriting—chiro-something-or-other he calls it. He is quite possessed by it."

"Oh sure," said Charley, and wrote his name in full on the pad.

He had scarcely finished when the door of the inner office popped open and a stout, florid man came out. This person was chewing on the moist stump of a thick cigar, and seemed to be under high pressure. He glared at Charley and Mr. Teeters, then swung around on his heel and bawled back into the other room

"A last word, Barlow. I'll make it a hundred and eighty thousand dollars. That's final. Just because you've got a good thing don't let it turn your head. What d'ye say?"

A short, snappy voice responded.

"No! Not in a million years!"

The stout man rolled a pair of bilious eyes frightfully.

"You're a fool!" he yelled. "An idiot! An ass! Bah!"

With this explosive utterance he blew himself out into the hall, banging the door after him. Miss Harding smiled amusedly at the two young men.

"He'll be back tomorrow," she observed, speaking guardedly and with a glance at the treasurer's door. "It's his way. He has raised his bid twice in two days."

She tore the slip with Charley's name on it from the pad and was moving off when Mr. Teeters hailed her.

"Say! I ain't written my name yet. I got a character. Let him take a hack at that, too, while he's in his trance."

The girl scanned him from under her heavy lashes, and then she laughed. Obviously Mr. Teeters had jumped to the conclusion that Mr. Barlow's fad was akin to clairvoyancy or other mystic art.

"He doesn't do it that way," she said. "He studies the lines and curves of the letters. Of course he wants your name. Mr. Vanderfelt—the confusion—made me forget."

She took the slip Mr. Teeters handed her and went into the private office, closing the door softly behind her.

"What do you know about it, Come-On?" chattered the gleeful secretary when she had gone. "Something big, turning down a hundred and eighty thousand yellow dogs like that! Hey?"

"Sure," said Charley. "Wonder what they do? Marvel Machine Company. What kind of machine?"

"By gum!" cried Mr. Teeters. "I bet it's flying machines. A new kind maybe. Wind 'em up like a seven-day clock, and off you go!"

Miss Harding's return put an end to further brilliant flights on Mr. Teeters' part.

"Walk in, please," she invited, holding the door for them. "Mr. Barlow, this gentleman is Mr. Carter. Mr. Teeters, Mr Barlow."

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SHE left them alone with the treasurer of the Marvel Machine Company. He was a powerfully built man who had ridden down his fortieth year. He had a square jaw, a close-cropped brown mustache, and cloudy, steel-colored eyes. He didn't offer to shake hands. He remained seated at an enormous desk in the middle of the room, and motioned them to draw up chairs. The desk was littered with papers. A check-book lay at his elbow, sprawled open, the stubs showing plentifully. And a blue-print from an architect's drawings was half spread out and weighted down over at one side amid the papers.

"Miss Harding was officious," spoke up Mr. Barlow curtly. "We are not seeking investors; but she has been with us a long time and I have overlooked her indiscretion."

"Sorry," said Charley. "And besides——"

"One minute!" broke in Mr. Barlow. "You are a man of determination, shrewd, clear-sighted, quick to form accurate estimates of values and as quick to act on them. Your judgment is sound. I gain that from your autograph."

Charley warmed under this diagnosis of his character. He couldn't help it. He had never seen himself in such a stimulating light before.

"You, sir," said the treasurer, turning to Mr. Teeters, "have more of the poetic in your nature. You have imagination, intuition, and the faculty of sizing up men—and more especially women—at their true worth. You would be a dangerous man to attempt to deceive. That is what I read in your sign manual."

Mr. Teeters wiggled his mustache and gazed at the speaker in a welter of pleasurable emotions. How the deuce could this chap point him off so true to life!

"It's my hobby," vouchsafed the man at the desk with a fleeting smile. "I never talk business to any one till I see the sort of fist they write."

"Good scheme," remarked Charley, not knowing what else to say.

"Now before we go farther," continued Mr. Barlow, "let me impress it on you that we wouldn't sell the controlling interest in this business—not to the King of England, if he came with his crown in his hand! No, sir!"

Mr. Barlow smote the desk with his hand to emphasize his adamantine resolution on this head. Then he said:

"We have fourteen hundred shares of treasury stock—a forty per cent. interest—which we will sell at par; precisely one hundred and forty thousand dollars; no more, no less. We are paying now a twenty-four per cent. yearly dividend. Our fiscal year begins on the fifteenth—day after tomorrow—Friday—and we shall pay on all stock issued by noon of Thursday our regular quarterly dividend of six per cent. In other words, whoever buys this treasury stock before tomorrow noon, will get eighty-four hundred dollars. It's like finding so much money in the street."

"Come-On!" piped Mr. Teeters in a quiver of excitement. "Didn't I tell you! It's a chance!"

"Wait!" enjoined Mr. Barlow sternly. "You must clearly understand one thing. We are selling this treasury stock simply because we've got to enlarge our business right away to take care of the demand. We are working on too small a cash margin. We need money to build a new factory—" he jerked a thumb at the blue-print—"and increase our force, and we don't want this money from scheming financiers like that pirate Vanderfelt who just went out of here. We want, along with the money, a man of executive ability whose counsel will be of value to us. In short, we want in our business——"

"What is the business?" interrupted Charley, looking a little ashamed of the question however.

Mr. Barlow fell limply back in his chair. Consternation was written on his features.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed, and repeated it—"Great heavens! Do you mean to say you haven't heard of the Marvel Vacuum Cleaner?"

"Oh," responded Mr. Teeters vaguely, "it's a soap!"

MR. BARLOW choked back a strong word. He got up and went over to a corner by the window. An instrument with a long handle, a steel mouth and a dust-bag attachment was propped up in the corner. He dragged this forth. It was connected by a cord with an electric-light bracket on the wall. Mr. Barlow turned on the current and proceeded to give a practical demonstration of carpet-cleaning.

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"That's the kind of a machine we've got," he concluded pridefully. "See the name lettered on it—Marvel Vacuum Cleaner. Call up any department store anywhere and ask 'em about it—any place that sells house or hotel supplies—and they'll tell you it's a world-beater."

"Sure," said Charley, confidently now. "They use it in the Rirebien. Good thing."

"Best ever!" chimed in Mr. Teeters. "Sucks the dirt up like eating soup."

Mr. Barlow sat down at his desk again.

"Ask about us anywhere," he begged them. "Look us up in Dun's or Bradstreet's. And wait!"

This appeared to be a favorite injunction with the gentleman. He drew the telephone to him and called up the Midland National Bank.

"Give me the book-keeping department—letter M," he requested. "That you, Mr. Arthur? This is Mr. Barlow of the Marvel Company. A stockholder—" he winked at Charley—"wishes to know our exact balance with you at this moment, as your books show it. Please tell him."

He handed the receiver to Charley who listened to the voice at the other end of the wire and handed back the cylinder to Barlow.

"Thank you; that's all," said the treasurer, and rang off. He addressed Charley. "Thirty-seven thousand, three hundred and twenty-two fifty, wasn't it?"

Charley told him he was right.

"Less eight thousand, seven hundred and sixty he doesn't know about," explained the other. "Dividends I've been checking out to mail on Friday." He gestured carelessly toward the open check-book. "Our working balance is small because we use the money up in manufacturing. That's the reason we need more—to expand. Now how do you stand?"

"Don't get you," replied Charley puzzled.

Mr. Barlow strove to contain himself.

"Is your check good for a hundred and forty thousand?" he snapped. "I can't waste my time in idle talk, sir. It's play or pass with me."

Charley grinned and reached for the telephone.

"Guess I can scrape it up," he stated while waiting for his bank to give him the cashier. When he finally got that official he said to him:

"Hello, Mr. Billings. This is Charley Carter of the Rirebien. What's my balance with you?" There was a short delay then Charley passed the receiver over to Barlow. "Repeat it, please," he called into the transmitter. "Much obliged," he added and motioned to the Marvel man to hang up.

A DULL red flush had mounted to the latter's cheek. He seemed to be a bit flustered. Possibly the size of Charley's bank balance had startled him. But he recovered himself. He took a book from a drawer and opened it, displaying a green sheet impressively engraved and ornamented. Without speaking he filled in the blanks on this sheet, signed it, affixed a gilt wafer in the corner, stamped it with the seal of the corporation, and shoved it over to Mr. Carter.

"Fourteen hundred shares," he said crisply.

Charley gazed at the certificate curiously. Mr. Teeters leaned over and peered at it. Mr. Barlow touched a button and a bell rang in the outer office. Miss Harding appeared on the instant.

"Has Mr. Gouldby come?" demanded the treasurer.

Miss Harding advanced a step or two.

"He is waiting to see you," she answered in a low tone. "He will take the stock, he says. He has brought a certified check——"

"Tell him he's too late! Send him away! The deal is closed!"

This was fired at the girl like shots from a gatling, and she went out hastily.

"By George! Say!" objected Charley. "I haven't——"

"Wait!"

Mr. Barlow shut him off peremptorily. He snatched up his check-book, wrote rapidly in it, tore out the check, and tossed it over on the stock-certificate.

"That's the quarterly dividend, by the way—eighty-four hundred dollars. We might as well fix it up now."

"Gollamighty, Come-On, it's a cinch!" broke out Mr. Teeters impassionedly.

Charley still hung back. Mr. Barlow punched the button angrily.

"Has Gouldby gone?" he barked at the girl.

"Yes—and he was very disagreeable," she returned with spirit. "He is going out of town at four, and he expected to close for the stock before he left. He said you'd thrown him down."

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Mr. Barlow waved her away and scowled at Charley.

"I've let a man go who was ready with his money! What's the matter? Afraid?"

"Come-On!" pleaded Mr. Teeters.

"Good thing," conceded Charley. "Where's the factory? Like to see it first."

Mr. Barlow pulled out a drawer and bent over it, rummaging the contents. He was at it some time and finally slammed the drawer back with an impatient exclamation.

"I thought I had a picture of the plant," he declared, "but I remember now, Vanderfelt has it. However, we'll run out and take a look at it, if you mean business. Do you?"

"Sure," said Charley. "Just want to have a peek for myself. Natural."

"Quite," growled Mr. Barlow. "Let me see." He stared out of the window. "We'll say tomorrow at eleven. We can close the thing up at the factory. You want to get in on that dividend.

"Sure," grinned Charley. "Where did you say the factory was?"

"I didn't say. But it's over in Jersey. I'll take you there in my machine. Eleven sharp." He rang for Miss Harding. "Show the gentlemen out," he bade her grufily. "And I'm not in to anybody. We have a directors' meeting at two."

Without the formality even of a parting word the busy treasurer of the Marvel Machine Company plunged into a pile of papers before him, and Charley and Mr. Teeters almost tiptoed from his presence.

III

THIS is a story of coincidences. We should have mentioned it in the first place. If you don't believe in coincidences, look back over your life and—if you have lived at all—you will recall strange meetings, partings, interferences and the like which you may have thought were accidental, but which were really coincidental. Perhaps you would prefer to call it concurrental. It sounds well—only there is no such word.

Charley in driving up-town from the Olympic Building passed Green's, the florist. There was a huge bank of Carolina violets in one window and Charley, spying it, grabbed the speaking-tube and bade his man stop the machine. Charley got out. Mr. Teeters would have done likewise, but was unceremoniously checked.

"Sit still," Mr. Carter ordered him. "Count the people going north. Tell me when I come back."

He went into Green's. Mr. Teeters began to count. He was afraid not to do it. Charley was queer at times.

Inside the shop Mr. Carter drew a visiting-card from his case and wrote his address on it. Flirt or no flirt, Dorothy should know him by name and number. Perhaps—but he allowed this thought to go no farther. He handed his card, together with a ten-dollar note, to a clerk. His instructions to him were a model of brevity. He said:

"Violets. Miss Dorothy Grant. Fifth Avenue and Seventy-fourth Street. Hurry!"

He turned abruptly and walked out. Mr. Teeters, half distracted with his task, greeted him with a wail.

"Merry Moses, Come-On, I ain't got more'n two eyes, and you need a hundred to count this mess of crabs. I'm all mixed up!"

"Sure," said Charley. "Forget it."

"Huh!" grumbled Mr. Teeters. "After all that trouble!"

He wanted to ask whom Charley was sending flowers to, but prudence forbade it: there was a set to his mouth Mr. Teeters didn't like.

They were blocked for a moment after leaving Green's. Another car, coming south, was just abreast of theirs, passing slowly, and as he casually glanced into it Charley's heart very nearly popped out from between his teeth. The Girl—Dorothy—was looking straight at him—full in the eyes! And she was smiling. At him! Before he could raise his hat—before he could even swallow his heart and breathe again—she was whirled from his sight.

MR. TEETERS saw, and he understood now his friend's remarkable behavior at Chatty's and afterwards. He also divined the cause of Charley's swooping call on the florist. But he kept his counsel; the fear of bodily violence was on him. He rejoiced openly when night came and Samuel Drew, attorney, and Teddy Ball, sporting editor of the *Evening Scream*, dropped in, as they had the habit of doing several times a week, both being unblessed and blissful bachelors. Charley had been as taciturn all the afternoon as a railway

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ticket-agent, and Mr. Teeters had undergone a martyrdom of silence. He took courage in the presence of the visitors.

"Have a look at the remains," he begged them, with a flourish of the hand at Mr. Carter who was sitting at the table. "The rosy posies got switched off to the wrong address, but maybe they'll send 'em back in time to decorate the grave."

He cackled loudly at this *jeu d'esprit.*

"What's up?" Mr. Ball desired to know.

Charley fixed his secretary with a menacing eye, but Mr. Teeters was reckless now and kept on.

"Gosh darn it, Come-On, what's the use? Tell 'em about it and take a load off your chest. It's a case of girl," he explained to the others. "Came on all of a sudden Monday night at the theater. He's been woozy in his head ever since."

With this Mr. Teeters recounted the incident at the Allrott, taking care, however, to keep well away from Mr. Carter's immediate vicinity.

"And," he wound up, "he's been sending her flowers! Little buds of bunk to his baby doll! What do you know about that?"

Mr. Drew's vest buttons heaved, but Mr. Ball, with an expression of deep concern, approached the patient.

"Where does it hurt you, Charles?" he inquired solicitously. "Is it in just one spot, or are you broken out all over?"

Charley gave him a sickly grin, and snatched a book from the table and flung it at him. Mr. Ball expertly dodged it and sought the shelter of Mr. Drew's portly form.

"He's violent!" he shrieked. "Save me!"

Mr. Drew shook him off and sat down.

"Who is she, Charley?" he questioned. "You might as well tell and have done with it."

Charley looked at the mocking face of Mr. Ball and at Mr. Teeters' leering countenance. The lawyer was right; it would be better to have it over with.

"Her father is George Francis Grant," he said quietly. "Gentleman."

Mr. Drew whistled softly.

"Wow!" whooped Teddy Ball. "I should say he was! Cup defender. Ex-champion polo-player. Baseball fan. Box-fight patron. A sport to the marrow. Say, Charley, we're like brothers, Grant and me. He calls me by my first name and I smoke his cigars. I've never happened to meet his daughte or we'd have been married long ago. B Jove, you're in luck, young fellow, to ge in with George Grant!"

Mr. Drew regarded his protegé with thoughtful air. A rich marriage migh solve the problem that confronted the at torney—how to explain away his practica joke about the Halstead millions. A happ bridegroom is an easy man to handle.

"Don't know my name even," Charle replied to Mr. Ball somberly. "Forgot t give it to him."

"Rattled!" gibed the *Scream* man. "Ob mush! But I'll fix it for you. He has a office down-town. Grant Estate. I'll tak you to see him. It's in the Olympic Build ing, fifteenth floor."

"Why—that's where we was today, Come On!" vociferated Mr. Teeters.

"What's that? You went to Grant' office?" Mr. Ball, who was grinding the end off a fat cigar with his teeth, suspended th operation in surprise.

"No," Charley answered for his secre tary. "Didn't know about it. Wish I had Went to see the Marvel Machine Com pany, tenth floor."

It was Mr. Drew's turn to exhibit surprise "Do you mean the company that makes the vacuum cleaner?"

"Sure," said Charley. "J. A. Barlow treasurer. Got a deal on with him."

"I know his brother well," rejoined the attorney. "Bill Barlow. He's a member of the Solicitors' Club. See him nearly every day at lunch. I've never met J. A. What is your deal with him, Charley?"

"Tell him, Skeeters." Charley shifted the burden of explanation to his secretary's shoulders. He despised explanations or speech of any kind which required a continuity of words.

"Wait!" said Mr. Teeters, unconsciously echoing J. A. Barlow.

He had an eye for the dramatic, especially when it brought himself into the limelight. He hunted around for Miss Harding's letter. When he found it he requested Messrs. Drew and Ball to peruse it, posing the while in an attitude of prideful complacency. He was waiting for them to come to the postscript, wherein his distinguished appearance received its merited tribute.

"Go on, Merciful," urged Mr. Ball presently. "There's only one thing phoney about this letter."

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"Phoney, eh? What's phoney?"

"The last part," returned Mr. Ball unfeelingly, and lighted his cigar.

Mr. Teeters passed the slur over with silent contempt, and related the incident at Chatty's which resulted in the letter. He then described in his own picturesque way their visit to the Marvel Machine Company's offices, and concluded with his personal impressions of the advantages that would accrue to Charley from the pending deal.

Mr. Ball gave ear to him with a puzzled frown.

"It seems to me I interviewed that Barlow chap once," he observed. "It was on the Carpet-Sweeper Trust. He was a director in it or something. I thought the Marvel people were in Nassau Street—the Orient Building—but probably they've moved. It's a year or more since I quizzed old Barlow."

"Not so old. Got all his teeth," amended Charley.

"Oh, well," yielded Mr. Ball, dismissing the matter in a cloud of smoke, "I'm barking up the wrong tree, I guess. Must be somebody else I'm thinking of."

"Bill Barlow's fifty. I don't know whether he's older or younger than his brother," mused Mr. Drew. "When is it you're going to the factory, Charley? What time tomorrow?"

"Eleven o'clock. Barlow's car."

"If Barlow doesn't object I'll go along," proposed Mr. Drew. "I wouldn't mind taking a block of that stock myself. I'm surprised they are hunting money."

"They're not," said Charley grinning. "It's hunting them. Only luck that I got a chance at it."

A KNOCK was given at the door. Mr. Teeters went to it and returned with a mincing step. He bore gingerly between thumb and forefinger a small square envelope, monogrammed, and of a faint, elusive fragrance.

"Left for Mr. Carter by private messenger," he proclaimed unctuously. "It's from a la-a-dy!"

Charley eyed him in slow astonishment. Then, as a startled hope sprang up and scurried around in him like a frightened rabbit in a cabbage-patch, his face grew brick-red and his hand shook as he held it out for the missive. But Mr. Ball was before him. He was rambling aimlessly about the room, enveloped in a fog of cinerating Havana, and now pounced on Mr. Teeters and dispossessed him of his prize.

"Um-um!" He sniffed avidly at the note and indulged in various facial contortions. "From a lady. O popper! And who is the little dear, I wonder?" He squinted at the monogram. "D. M. G. Goodness me! Now what can that stand for, do you suppose—Dolly Molly Gushgiddy, or Delia Melia Gidgushy? Let's take a peek inside and see."

He made a great pretense of opening the note, but so far as the effect produced on Charley went it missed the mark. He had recovered his poise.

"Welcome," he said pleasantly. "Go on. Read it."

"Oh, beans!" retorted the disconcerted newspaper man. "Read it yourself. I left my smelling-salts at home."

He dropped the letter into Charley's hand. Charley quietly slipped it into his pocket and looked politely at his visitors as if he were waiting for them to make further conversation.

"Deuce take you!" shouted Mr. Ball. "I'd as soon try to get a rise out of a dead snail. Come on, Teet, let's go down and roll the ivories around. I'm tired of sitting up with these remains."

Charley grinned at them as they went out.

"Sorry," he remarked. "Dull without you."

He looked at Mr. Drew as he said it, amiably expectant and tolerant. The lawyer returned the gaze with a humorous scowl.

"Why, damme, sir," he snorted, "you're trying to freeze me too! Where did you learn the trick? It's something new with you."

Charley stared at him the harder.

"Got me guessing. Don't catch on."

"Umph!" grunted the portly advocate. "You don't say! Well, it works all right—your ice plant. I'm going!"

He rose, peering around for his hat; and his vest buttons were gently undulating with suppressed merriment.

"Sorry," began Charley.

"You say false, you jackanapes!" roared the other, wheeling on him. "You're not sorry. You want to be alone to read that note. I know what your trouble is; I was

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young once myself. And Lord, Lord, what a devil of a fellow I was with the girls!"

He cocked his hat on his head and tried to look the part as he remembered it, casting back along the rather too numerous years.

"I'm going," he repeated. "I'll be with you tomorrow if I can. And by the way, my boy—er—ah—this Miss Grant. Eh? You know there is more than one road to riches."

"What's the other?" asked Charley, his hazel eyes twinkling. "With Uncle Bill's two millions——"

"You haven't got that yet," cut in the lawyer irritably. "I've explained about it till I'm tired. You've a million of your own to earn first, and you're a long way this side of it. But a marriage might help you on a bit. Eh?"

Charley offered no comment and Mr. Drew proceeded, assuming an oracular air.

"Matrimony, my son, considered as an institution, is essential to human progress. It is the bulwark of civilization. The home is the center from which radiates—er—ah—confound you, sir, for an impudent puppy! What are you grinning at? Because I never married and was a fool for it, is no reason why you who are a fool shouldn't marry for it. Good night and be hanged to you!"

He blustered out of the room. Charley, alone now, took the note from his pocket. It was thin to emaciation—just her card, probably, with a word of thanks. He studied the handwriting of the address, wishing he were an expert at it like J. A. Barlow. He could tell then if she really was a flirt.

There was an ivory paper-knife on the table and with this he severed the envelope. It was as he had surmised; she had sent him her card. He drew it out and read her name—Dorothy Maud Grant. He turned it over and a light sprang into his eyes—they glowed! There were but eleven written words yet they held him spellbound. He read them over and over. He was minutes at it. They opened vistas new and dazzling to his sight.

He got up finally and went into his bedroom and locked the door. He wished to see no one in mortal guise again that night. You who walk with youth unsullied, and can look upon a maid as one who has stepped down from a star, you may know what Charley felt—you only! And yet Dorothy had written—and in a hand that was a geometrical riddle—merely this:

How kind of you! We shall be at home Friday night.

IV

IF YOU noted no coincidences in the previous chapter it will be useless to call your attention to those in this. They are here though.

At eight o'clock on Thursday morning Charley was called to the telephone from the breakfast table. It was Mr. J. A. Barlow. He desired to shift the hour for the start to the factory from eleven to nine. Matters had come up which would require his presence in town at twelve.

Charley agreed to this. He and Mr. Teeters hurried through their meal and took the subway to Fulton Street, the stop nearest the Olympic Building. They had no time to call up Mr. Drew at his bachelor apartments and inform him of the change in plans; and, to be exact, they didn't think of it until they were on their way.

At half after eight Mr. George Francis Grant was telephoned from his office that a cablegram he was expecting from London had arrived. It necessitated an immediate conference with his attorney who, as it chanced, was William Barlow, Esq., familiarly known to Mr. Drew as "Bill."

Mr. Grant was an early riser and, *mirabile dictu*, so was his only child and daughter, Dorothy. Mr. Grant ordered out his car forthwith and speeded cityward, as we good Anglomanists now speak of everything below Astor Place. It was a bright and balmy day—February in New York flirts with all the seasons—and Dorothy went along with her father to take the morning air.

At a little after nine o'clock Mr. Drew, journeying by tube to his office in Pine Street, got to thinking of the Marvel Machine Company and was seized with an unaccountable desire to question Bill Barlow about it without delay. Barlow's office was in Nassau Street, between John and Maiden Lane, and Mr. Drew alighted at the Fulton Street station at nine-thirty, just forty minutes after Charley and Mr. Teeters had climbed the stairs.

At ten minutes of ten Mr. Teddy Ball, sitting at his desk in the *Scream* office in William Street, found a subconscious thought, which had persisted with him since the night before, taking percipiency in his

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mind. In obedience to it he put on his hat and went down the street a couple of blocks to the Olympic Building. He wanted to see if the J. A. Barlow Charley knew was the man he had interviewed a year ago.

Thus it fell out that at the precise moment Mr. Ball was putting on his hat in William Street, Mr. Grant's limousine was drawing up to the walk in Nassau Street as Mr. Drew and Mr. William Barlow came rushing forth from the latter's office. And thus it was that, a little later, Mr. Grant's machine, racing around from Nassau Street into William, with the four inside talking like a house afire, pulled up at the Olympic Building just as Mr. Ball approached the door.

If, confiding reader, you can not recognize coincidence in this we apologetically doubt if you would know it should you meet it in the big road calling to you with a megaphone. And if you don't believe all this could have happened as pat and pertinent as we have set it down, the gifted story-tellers of the day—in whose godlike wake we humbly creep along—have writ in vain.

Now let us jump to Jersey and see what, at the same hour, was going on over there.

ON EITHER side of the Newark road are factories of one kind and another scattered about on the marshes. On this road sped a high-powered limousine. It turned off toward one of the factories some two miles out from Jersey City. In the limousine were Charley, Mr. Teeters and Mr. J. A. Barlow. It was an inside drive, and Barlow was at the wheel.

The factory stood perhaps a thousand feet from the pike, end toward the road—a long, squat brick structure, the paint scaling from the walls, and the marsh-grass growing high around it. No other buildings were close by. The office was in the rear end. There were heavy shutters to the windows, which were grated.

Beyond the office was a truck door, rolled back part way. Framed in this opening was a man in overalls. He disappeared into the building as the automobile approached. Simultaneously another man peered out from the office-door and in the same breath retreated; it was like a turtle popping its head out of its shell and in again.

Charley viewed this uninspiring scene stolidly, but Mr. Teeters burst out with an exclamation of dismay.

"Is this the place? Gorry gosh! Go easy, James, or you may wake somebody up."

"They have shut down for repairs," explained Mr. Barlow. "Blew out a cylinder-head this morning. Bowles 'phoned me about it after I'd talked with you. Bowles is our superintendent."

He guided the car up to a brace of rickety wooden steps. Charley noticed a small sign tacked to the bricks. It bore the company's name. His eyes narrowed as he surveyed it. It was dusty, but it wasn't dingy; and there was no dust on the marsh. Still——

The man in the overalls came out to meet them. He said:

"Mr. Bowles would like to see you in the office first, Mr. Barlow. He's got something to show you."

"All right," consented Mr. Barlow. "Turn this car around, Jim. Walk in, gentlemen. We'll go through the factory after we see Bowles."

Charley and Mr. Teeters stepped in through the door. Mr. Barlow stepped in at their heels and closed the door. Instantly there was a sound as of a bolt being shot into place; but, oddly enough, it came from the outside. At the sound a man—Mr. Bowles, presumably—standing at the far end of the room, slewed around. Synchronously the noise of another bolt shooting home was heard. It came from the door which led into the factory proper.

THEY were trapped, Charley and Mr. Teeters, as prettily as a pair of pigeons!

Mr. Teeters, of the sickly color of a chilled Camembert cheese, gazed affrightedly about him; but Charley grinned at the man who had turned to meet them. It was the flashily dressed individual, now soberly attired, he had encountered Monday night after the theater.

"Where's the lady?" asked Mr. Carter evenly. "Party not complete."

His grin, which endured, was not, however, a pleasant thing to contemplate just then, and Mr. Bowles who was a prudent sort of person it seemed, rather hastily displayed a nasty-looking automatic.

"Don't get gay!" he retorted with a scowl. "We've got business with you, and it isn't funny!"

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"And I'm pressed for time," snapped Mr. Barlow. "Sit down at that desk!"

He also had produced a disagreeable-looking little gun, and it was pointed most offensively at the pit of Charley's stomach.

"Come-On!" groaned Mr. Teeters.

"Shut up—you!" hissed Mr. Bowles viciously. "Take that chair in the corner. If you breathe loud I'll put a hole in your gizzard."

There was something so peculiarly sanguinary in the threat that Mr. Teeters hurriedly took the chair indicated and tried not to breathe at all. Mr. Barlow iterated his command to Charley.

"Sit at that desk! I'll be out of this in five minutes, but I've a word to say to you first. This time, Mr. Come-On Charley, you're the one who is going to come across. You've put it over on the boys up to now, but I'm going to wipe the slate clean. You wouldn't bite yesterday, though we fixed that plant up just for you—you only, understand—company name, office, bank account—the whole bag of tricks. Only the telephone was in my own name, which isn't Barlow. You wouldn't bite; now, by——, *I* am going to bite! Sit down!"

Charley obeyed. Resistance would be suicide; Barlow was as plainly in earnest as a copperhead snake coiled to strike. But Charley's wits were all alive. A girl's smile might scatter them, but not a man's threat. Charley was of a breed whose blood ran all red.

"What's the game?" he inquired coolly.

Barlow laid before him a blank check. It was from Charley's bank. Pen and ink were on the desk.

"Draw it to 'Cash' for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars," commanded the con man. "I'd make it more if I thought I could put it through, but I won't chance it." He chuckled savagely. "You'd have got off for a hundred and forty thousand yesterday if you hadn't been such a wise guy."

"Sorry," said Charley. "You're hitting me hard."

He dipped the pen in the ink and started to write. Barlow watched him narrowly.

"Play it straight," he cautioned. "I have your signature in full. You can't fool me!"

"Sure," said Charley. "Got me dead. Know when I'm licked."

He signed the check and Barlow compared it with the name on the slip of paper Miss Harding had brought in to him the day before. He grunted his satisfaction, and walked to the door and called through it.

"All right, Jim. Close up."

Jim began noiselessly closing the shutters to the windows, and these, too, he bolted from the outside. It had all been planned in advance, even to the carefully dust-powdered new tin sign.

BOWLES followed Barlow to the door. Both kept Charley and Mr. Teeters covered with their guns. There were three windows to the office, one in each of the outer walls. Jim closed the shutters at the back and at the end. Then he waited.

Barlow gave another ugly chuckle.

"You stumped me for a minute yesterday," he confessed to Charley. "Then I thought of this old shack—I'd marked it down for another job—and got busy with it."

"Great idea. Worked fine."

Charley applauded the rascally maneuver almost with enthusiasm. One would have thought he had not been touched by it were it not for the evidence of the check which the other was in the act of placing in his pocketbook. Barlow grunted and replied:

"I'll be at your bank in an hour. That will be half-past eleven. At twelve I'll telephone the Jersey City police. If they're feeling particularly spry they'll probably get around to let you out before you starve to death."

Mr. Teeters whimpered, and Mr. Bowles spat upon the floor in witness of the disgust this pusillanimous behavior inspired in him.

"I guess that's all," Barlow finished. "You've shook a lot of us down, you infernal young rube, but today we'll declare a dividend on you. You've run your rig. If you're a sport you'll can your squeal. If you're not, holler till hell freezes over—it's all the same to me."

He tapped twice on the door. The bolt was drawn and they backed out of the room. The door was fastened promptly, and the remaining shutters were closed. Charley and Mr. Teeters heard the exhaust of the car as it started off, and then all was quiet. It was black as a tar-baby in the stuffy little coop.

"Come-On!" wailed Mr. Teeters from out of the darkness. "They fooled us this time, sure enough. Con men! Golla-

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mighty! And they cut a hole in your squash you could drive a cow through! Gollamighty! Gollamighty!"

A curious sound came from Charley.

"What's the matter, Come-On?" queried Mr. Teeters tremulously. "You ain't—oh, gosh—you ain't crying?"

Charley did not answer. He struck a match to light a cigar he had discovered in his pocket, and Mr. Teeters, as he glimpsed him, gasped.

Charley was laughing.

IT WAS considerably more than an hour later when they heard a car drive up and the noise of excited voices talking all at once.

"Are you there, Charley, my boy?" It was Mr. Drew calling anxiously.

"Sure," called Charley back to him. "Come in. We haven't gone to bed yet."

The bolt was drawn and the door thrust open. Mr. Drew stumbled in. Mr. Grant and Teddy Ball followed leading between them Miss Jane Harding. Her head was up defiantly and her eyes were hard and venomous. Charley stared, not at Mr. Ball nor at his captive. It was the sporting millionaire who held his gaze. What—how—where——

And then Dorothy entered. Charley looked at her and was stricken dumb. She was wearing his violets and her face, despite the smile she forced to her lips, showed real concern.

"Well, Mr. Carter, we meet again," said Mr. Grant, eyeing him keenly. "How have you made out?"

Charley being tongue-tied, Mr. Teeters raised a hue and cry.

"Merry Moses!" he squealed. "Made out? Like the guy who had a house fall on him. There was a gang of 'em here that'd cut your pipes for a paper of pins. And they made Come-On shuck a quarter of a million off his roll!"

Mr. Drew staggered.

"Good Lord!" he groaned. "What did you give them—a check?"

Charley nodded.

"O mommer!" yelled Mr. Ball. "Let's get to a telephone quick and stop it!"

He made a dive for the door. Charley found his tongue.

"No use," he said.

Miss Harding laughed ironically.

"You thought," she scoffed at Mr. Ball, "when you caught me leaving the office and I fainted, it was real. You thought your threats frightened me, but I was only playing for time. And then I brought you here around by Hoboken!" She laughed again. "It's the joke of the year!"

"It's a peach for the *Scream!*" exulted Teddy Ball.

Dorothy regarded Charley in a way that made his hair tingle at the roots; but she said nothing.

"We've got one of the crowd, anyway," spoke up Mr. Drew sternly. "We shall see what she'll have to say when they talk with her at the Central Office."

Charley grinned at him and shook his head.

"Girl. Don't fight that kind. Sorry for her. And she said it—it's a joke."

Dorothy's eyes kindled, but her father, mystified, echoed the word:

"A joke? I fear I'm a little dense, young man. The scoundrel has cashed in by this."

"Yes, by Jove!" exclaimed Teddy Ball. "If you call it a joke to draw a check——"

"Didn't sign it right," interposed Charley. "All luck, though. Signed it, by request, Charles Arthur Carter. Wanted to oblige. Bank signature is Charles A. Carter."

His grin now was infectious; everybody grinned—everybody except Miss Jane Harding. She gave him a look that ought to have killed. But Dorothy—notwithstanding Charley's disclaimer of merit for himself—clapped her hands impulsively and cried out—

"Oh, you clever, clever boy!"

And this, for obvious reasons, is one Come-On story which doesn't end—in spoken words at least—with—

"'Sure,' said Charley."

The next adventure of *Come-On Charley* will appear complete in the March issue.

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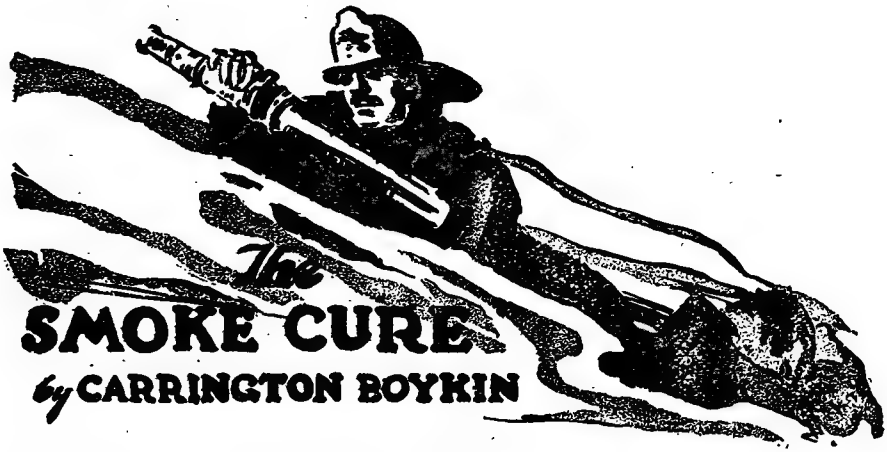

The SMOKE CURE

by CARRINGTON BOYKIN

"SMOKY JIM" DUFFY, Battalion Chief, advocated prohibition in fire circles, consequently the fire-house in Great Jones Street, where dwelt Engine Company 78, the pet of the fire-extinguishing apparatus under his command, exhaled the atmosphere of a temperance league.

"Booze and firemen don't mix," he once informed a probationer whom he had just floored for getting drunk. "A man can't fight fire when he's got it inside him."

With this slogan Duffy led his campaign for sobriety in the battalion, often threatening to wash out a man's craving with a hose, but usually blazing an unforgettable trail to temperance with his fists. Alcohol meant poison to Duffy, so far as a fireman was concerned, for he knew that strong drink has a way of unstringing the nerves of a man whose life is fraught with critical, flame-swept moments. So in the department Duffy's battalion became known as the Teetotalers—a name of which he was justly proud.

The D in Duffy's name stood for discipline; he embodied it every whit. Above six feet, brawny as Samson, with fists that resembled a pair of wooden mauls, he was eminently fitted for his job. Because of these same fists, hair-triggered and ready to fly at the faintest glimmer of mutiny, his men feared yet worshiped him; for he had a heart almost as big as his body, and an honest tongue even though it frequently bellowed unprintable things at them.

Twenty years of peril had surcharged him with knowledge of his business; no man in New York's Fire Department was better schooled than he in the caprices of fire; he knew them all, and ways to thwart them.

The day after "Old Sal" the engine, with Wilson at the reins, collided with a street-car on the Bowery, killing the middle horse, the fire-house was not unlike the neighborhood of a rumbling volcano which threatened to vomit forth its fiery hail any moment.

It was wash-day. Every square inch of metal in Old Sal's intricate frame had to be burnished until it mirrored, the hose-wagon sponged and tidied up, harness polished, floors scrubbed, and horses barbered as to manes, tails, and fetlocks. Moreover, there was a new horse in the second stall, who caused endless confusion by rushing out every time the gong sounded an alarm on another circuit.

Not a man who busied himself with the chores this morning but cast many anxious glances toward the brass slide-pole that ran to Duffy's room on the second floor, expecting any moment to see a bulky form shoot down the smooth runner and pitch headlong into the company. He had been known to follow such a program on certain former occasions.

Truth to tell, Duffy was out of sorts. He had already solved what mystery there was to the accident of the day before by the single word—whisky! He knew that it required a cool head, a pair of keen eyes, and a steady hand to pilot a trio of plunging horses and a two-ton mass of steel through the ever-changing maze of New York City's traffic; and when Wilson, the veteran driver, drove his horses in devil-may-care fashion into the side of a street-car, Duffy

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felt that something was out of gear—not with the horses or the machine, but with Wilson. However, strange as it may seem, in his report to the Commissioner on the happening, the Chief exonerated Wilson of all responsibility and charged it up to the motorman of the car.

Wilson was one of Duffy's boasts; he had literally forged the man; and like the artisan he took pride in the product he had hammered out of the crude ingot of humanity with which he had started.

At one time Wilson had been a lion-tamer, roaming from city to city with a big-tented circus; but when the outfit stranded, he was drawn into the maelstrom of New York where he set a dizzy whirl until Duffy fished him out and made a fire-fighter out of what circusing had overlooked. And Duffy was ever loath to see alcohol play havoc with his handiwork.

THE company exuded industry this morning amid silence pregnant with impending disaster. At last the outbreak came.

"Wilson, come here!" thundered Duffy down the slide-pole shaft.

The driver dropped his sponge where he had been polishing Old Sal's stack and, kissing his hand to his comrades, darted up the winding iron steps that led to Duffy's office. The Chief, scowling like an angry giant, a truculent gleam in his gray eyes, was standing in the middle of the room, clad in an old pair of regulation blue trousers and undershirt. His vocal batteries let fire as soon as Wilson's head appeared above the landing.

"Come in here, you puppy, and shut the door!" he shouted.

Wilson, in his brown overalls, obeyed with alacrity, remembering that Duffy's fist carried a punch like a load of brick.

"Come closer and look at me!" growled the Chief. "When a man can't look me in the eyes, I believe he's getting yellow—that's what rum does for a man, makes a yellow dog out of him; and you've got to get off it or get out. I ought to jam this fist in your face so you can't put booze into it—that's what you need!"

Duffy's wrath blazed. In fact the day itself was enough to pucker his temper; it was one of those close, breathless July days, when the city swelters and pants for air, reminding one of the vestibule to Hades. Great beads of perspiration stood out on the Chief's forehead which he occasionally wiped with his hairy forearm. The driver's eyes never strayed for an instant from the ponderous fist that dangled as if itching to spring at his jaw, and he keyed his legs for a quick sidestep.

"Wasn't it you as was telling me about whisky ruining a man's nerve?"

Wilson nodded.

"You couldn't booze when you was handling beasts, you told me that they'd know the booze was eating up your nerves. Fire's worse than all the lions and tigers you ever fooled with, it's got red-hot claws and red-hot teeth, and it bites quick and fast, and it's always hungry; it don't care what it eats, and it ain't afraid of God or man, and it always gets a coward."

The Chief paused significantly as if to let his remarks sink in.

"Booze makes a coward out of a man, Wilson, and a coward can't fight fire. You were drunk when you pitched that horse into that car, and if you say you weren't I'll splinter this fist on your face so you won't know yourself next time you look in the glass."

Duffy took a step nearer. His eyes burned like two gray flames. The driver's gaze was fastened on the huge left fist that always led off in a mill.

"Right here, you're going to cut out booze," went on Duffy, his voice moderating to an ominous growl, "and it won't be a pledge—I wouldn't give a whoop for a million of 'em! You're going to quit because I say so and if you don't, I'll use these," and he shoved his scarred, leathery fists forward for the fireman's inspection. "Now get back downstairs. After this you'll ride the hose-wagon; I've told the Dutchman to drive Old Sal."

FOR days after his ultimatum to Wilson, Smoky Jim's grouch persisted; and he tasked his band of smoke-eaters like a slave-driver until the germ of mutiny was squirming in every breast in the fire-house.

Only one man ventured to twit Wilson about his demotion from engine-driver to strap-hanger on the hose-wagon, but the offender was promptly silenced by a broadside of oaths and threats from Duffy, who happened at that moment to drop silently like a plummet down the nearest slide-pole.

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The chief tolerated no fun with the shake-ups he made for the good of the department. However, the tacit opinion prevailed in the company that Wilson was the fountainhead of the chief's wholesale wrath.

"If Wilson'd only quit what he's doing," grumbled the Dutchman who abhorred his new duties, "the old man'd tame down and stop using us like dogs. I ain't saying he's boozing, but I'll bet he had his eye on a liquor sign when he ran Old Sal into the car."

The reduction to the lowly hose-wagon was a bitter pill to the giant fireman whose fingers understood the least give and pull of the reins. Not a man in the company who but noticed how galling Wilson's new duties were to him; nevertheless Duffy was well pleased, knowing that in some cases chagrin disciplined a man more effectively than bruising.

Out of the tail of his eye, however, the chief kept close tabs on the burly fireman, and his fists were cocked night and day for symptoms of strong drink. But Wilson was wary, and if he drank during "off-hours," he was clever enough to rid himself of all telltale traces by the time he reported for duty again.

For a time Duffy thought he had intimidated Wilson into the fold of temperance. Yet doing things by halves was not in Duffy's line—he never left a fire until he had seen the ruins properly washed down, drowning the last spark that might rekindle. So, undecided whether or not Wilson had joined the ranks of sobriety, the chief quietly prescribed his noted "smoke-cure" for the fireman.

Through this, his own antidote for the drink habit, Duffy had a score of times made demon rum turn tail and vamoose like a dog with a tin can aft; indeed, even failing to bring about abstinence, it invariably betrayed secret bibbling—alcohol and smoke taken internally being bitterest of foes.

Heretofore, the ex-driver had only to watch his horses, while the rest of the crew tumbled into burning buildings and lived for hours on smoke and flames; but now, relegated to the nozzle-grabbers, he shared heavily in the smoke-eating.

WILSON'S first real dose was in a cellar fire on Worth Street, that smoked like a volcano, where Duffy ordered him into the basement with two of the hardiest smoke-eaters in the company.

Five minutes was sufficient, and Wilson, deserting his mates, staggered out dead-sick and pale to flop in a nauseated heap on the sidewalk. And though an ambitious ambulance-surgeon used a pulmotor on the fireman and declared his condition serious to the reporters, Duffy stood off and smiled; even after the return to quarters he made no reference to the incident. But his suspicions had gained a foothold, and the next morning he delivered a sulphurous sermon on intemperance to the company assembled for inspection.

One night a week later a paint-factory on Broome Street sprung ablaze. For just such an opportunity Duffy had been waiting, and in a twinkling he shot the ex-driver into the thick pungent smoke of the frying paint. Wilson lasted ten minutes—longer, however, than the chief had calculated—and then was bundled out of a second-story window and tenderly relayed down a ladder by his comrades.

With a flourish of fists Duffy charged down upon the men who hurried forward to give first aid to the unconscious fireman.

"Let him be!" he shouted as he rushed up, and the group, wondering at the sudden inhumanity of their chief, scattered like flies.

When Wilson opened his eyes the chief was glaring down at him.

"Git up, you yellow puppy," scowled Duffy. "I told you booze'd make a white-liver out of you. Pity you ain't being carted off by an undertaker. What'd you leave the other fellows for?"

"The smoke knocked me over," said the dazed fireman weakly. "I ain't used to it—been driving the horses so long, I forgot how to eat such big lumps."

The chief nudged the fireman's ribs with the toe of his rubber boot.

"Git up! I ain't going to tell you again. Next time I'm going to kick you in the gutter where you belong. Git up; you're going back where you came from. Had no business coming out here to lay down like you was sick. Git up!"

The fireman staggered to his feet.

"Now grab hold on that line," ordered Duffy, pointing to a hose that three huskies were towing into the main entrance of the blazing building.

Wilson hesitated and put up a hand to adjust his helmet. In a flash Duffy was at him, snarling, fists drawn back, his gray eyes glistening with rage.

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"Git!" he bellowed fiercely, "or I'll ram a fist down your throat. You ain't sick, it's booze."

The fireman bit his lip and reeled drunkenly after the men who at that moment were disappearing with the nozzle into the stifling smoke. Duffy smiled coldly, then turned to volley a string of orders at a water-tower crew working near by.

Five minutes later, through a rift in the smoke that choked the street, Duffy saw a fireman, helmetless, crawl out of the building on all fours and collapse on the sidewalk. No second glance was necessary to convince him that it was Wilson.

"The yellow dog," he muttered into the bedlam of shrieking, pulsing engines. Then he called to a probationer:

"There's a man over there in the smoke. Git a bucket of water and douse him. If any of those angels from the ambulance come messing around, tell 'em to keep away, that you're washing the booze out."

THE next day it was covertly gossiped about the fire-house that Wilson was a quitter. Three of the company were ready to swear that he had deliberately abandoned his post at the nozzle when a high-pressure was discharging so violently that four men could hardly control it.

"It wouldn't 'a' been so bad," complained one of the three, "but there was that paint a-stewing and sizzling all around us, and the nozzle throwing three hundred a minute and kicking like a mule, when he just lays down and sneaks off, with us hollering to him to come back and git his hat."

But none of these rumors reached Duffy's ears; for he invariably thrashed the man who brought him tales of a comrade's shortcomings. Tattlers, cowards and drunkards headed his list of undesirables. He judged men by what he, not others, saw.

When the chief left at noon to make his daily round of the battalion, the company, with the exception of Wilson, held a conclave in the rear of the stalls. The Dutchman presided.

"He's got a yellow streak wide as my hand," he asserted hotly, holding out a red palm, not unlike a large piece of beef. "I seen him last night crawling out like a snake, and the horses did, too, and they actually looked the other way. If them horses could talk, they'd tell you they feel disgraced. Believe me, the old man's as wise as us."

The cluster grunted approvingly.

"Ever since he took to booze, Oi've seen it coming," voiced Pete, a hulking Irishman, whose conversion from "wet" to "dry" had been a strenuous, smoky affair.

The sound of the tapper forced a hasty adjournment, with Wilson unanimously voted yellow.

Days passed and the ex-driver, under the ban of his mates, went about his tasks in moody silence; more than once his eyes encountered Duffy's and looked daggers for a second before dropping. The midsummer lull in fires was on, and save for a couple of night runs to minor blazes the company vegetated in its quarters, where it found ample occasion to nurse its grievance against the fireman. So he became a nonenity in the social life of the fire-house, not a man daring tamper with him. The chief was equally mute; he needed more smoke to complete his "cure," so he waited.

THE freighter *Mandalay* from Sierra Leone, deep-laden with palm-oil and rubber, took fire at her pier on the East River about dusk one evening late in August. For days, unknown to her skipper, the coal at the bottom of her bunkers had been smoldering, but Providence had kindly staved off open combustion until the boat had warped lazily into her berth, and the creaking hawsers were coiling around the capstans. A few minutes later smoke began to well up from her engine-room.

Manning the ship's hose, the crew of blacks watered the burning bunkers until the flames sneaked into the cargo and began lapping up palm-oil; then, panic-stricken, the pack mutinied with a rush that even the revolvers of the officers failed to stem.

Steamer 78 and her crew of smoke-eaters rolled out on the second alarm. It was a hot, grueling run through a network of East Side streets dotted with children—a nerve-racking task for the man at the reins—but the company sailed through neatly, Smoky Jim leading in his buggy, and made the waterfront in record time for a Summer run.

Duffy found chaos rampant; two engines were idle; the long covered pier was a wilderness of flabby, useless hose; three fire-boats, like water-bugs, nosed in and out about the burning hull, playing ineffective streams

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across the decks; and men with lanterns in hand darted aimlessly about under a crossfire of senseless orders from excited superiors. The air was heavy with greasy smoke that volumed out of the cargo-hatch of the ship that was listing slightly to port.

At a single sweeping glance Duffy measured the work cut out for him, and ten minutes after he took command the confusion had given way to coöperative fire-fighting. His sonorous orders, coruscated with matchless oaths, burrowed their way into the heart of the turmoil with telling, calming effect, and men jumped to execute them without delay.

DUFFY encountered the skipper, a lanky, bronzed man, at the foot of one of the ladders erected from the pier to the deck of the ship.

"What you got aboard her?" he shouted hoarsely.

"Barreled oil and enough rubber to bury her to the waterline," responded the skipper grimly. "It started in the bunkers. She's insured the limit."

"Everybody off?" rumbled Duffy.

"'Cept a beast billed to one of the zoos here," replied the seaman. "Young lion in a crate on the first deck of the forward hold. We took him on at Freetown. Been like a lamb all the way across. Poor devil, he'll go crazy with all that smoke."

"I'm afraid he'll smother," said Duffy as he started up a ladder.

The fire was all below decks, not a wisp of flame curling in the black smoke that billowed up from the hold; and when Duffy reached the deck he found three nozzles emptying into the smoking hatch. One nozzle-crew was 78. A lieutanant reported to him that the fire was confined to the forward hold and was shut off from the after hold where the rubber was stored by a steel bulkhead. Already streams from the fire-boats playing through the coal hatch were making good headway against the blazing bunkers.

But Duffy knew his ground well, for he had battled with burning oil-tankers that defied him for days; so he stationed a man with an ax at each hawser with orders to cut the ship from her moorings if the flames began to peep outside, and he ordered a tug to stand by ready to nudge the vessel out into midstream when he gave the word. He sent two probationers aft.

"Hang to them sea-cocks, and if you hear me yell, open 'em up, and let the East River in. Git!" And the men darted down the warming decks.

Fifteen minutes later Duffy called for a ladder and lowered it some twenty feet into the hold, until it touched bottom.

"I'm going down to open the starboard hatch," he shouted through the smoky din. "She'll gut the boat if we don't hurry. Somebody got to go with me."

Three of the men struggling with the nozzle, that leaped like a trip-hammer under Old Sal's strokes, shoved their smoke-grimed faces forward eagerly; the fourth, almost hidden by helmet, rubber coat and boots, crouched unheeding in his place beside the nozzle.

The chief eyed the volunteers with a half-smile.

"So you all want to go, you puppies?" he roared. "Thought I'd taught you better manners. Greedy as hogs after medals, you are."

And the chief swore at them for their zeal—often he vented his admiration in oaths.

"Who's the other?" he asked, shoving a lantern at their silent comrade.

"Wilson," came the muffled response from one of the three. "He ain't feeling well, the smoke's too much for him."

"He ain't, ain't he?" exploded the chief. "Git up, Wilson, you're going down with me."

THROUGH Duffy's mind flashed the "smoke-cure"—there was the chance he needed and welcomed. At times of extreme peril when duty demanded that some one run death's gauntlet, he ran it alone, driving back with oaths and blows those who wished to accompany him, valuing his men's lives more than his own; but now, with a two-man job ahead of him, he chose Wilson for reasons he best knew.

The fireman complied sullenly like a lash-driven slave, his strapping rubber-coated figure bulking hugely in the smoke as he rose to his feet and faced his superior. Duffy held a lantern to his face; it was pale and set, and his eyes were wide and wild like those of a man at bay.

"Git an ax and be quick about it!" screeched Duffy, brandishing a bludgeon-like

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fist at the fireman. He had seen a glitter of mutiny in the man's eyes. "We're going down to open a hatch so the boats can shoot in some water."

The three man huddling over the nozzle sniffed contemptuously at Duffy's selection.

"Wonder why the old man's taking that jellyfish with him?" growled one of them under his helmet. "Hope he leaves him down there."

Swiftly it was megaphoned through the fury of the conflagration for Old Sal to shut down until further orders, and in a jiffy the nozzle-crew was clinging to a lifeless brass nozzle. The other two crews fell in line.

"Now grab that hose," shouted Duffy to Wilson. "We're going to carry it along."

He lashed a rope to his belt and turned to the lieutenant to whom he had just given command of the crews working through the hatch.

"When I yank, tell Old Sal to hit 'er up again. The two of us can handle 'er."

The ex-driver hitched an ax to his belt and slung a section of limp hose over his shoulders.

"Now come on, you yellow dog!" bellowed Duffy as he set foot on the ladder. "Keep your mouth shut."

It was like dropping into the Well of Damnation; but Duffy feared no fire; for aught he cared he would have invaded Hades with lines of hose and picked men at the nozzles. He went first, lantern in hand, feeling his footing on each rung, while gusts of hot, oily smoke boiled upward past him; and the ex-driver followed, with the man above paying out the hose grudgingly as he descended.

Under the weight of the two men the ladder swayed perilously; but Duffy lowered himself carefully, his ears straining for the swish of flame. The lantern was useless. At the bottom he felt about gingerly with his booted foot before he finally planted it on the head of an oil barrel; then he paused until Wilson stood beside him. He heard a cough.

"The cure's getting busy," he commented inwardly.

Duffy stared hard through the smoky gloom, until at last far ahead his watery eyes discerned a jet of ruby that darted up like a dragon's flaming tongue. There, he figured, was the exit for the main body of flame, and somewhere to the right of it in the stifling murk lay the starboard hatch, bolted from the inside. He breathed irregularly; he could taste the sickening oil in his throat.

He tugged at Wilson's arm, but his hand was struck aside viciously. In a flash his whole being rose to quell the mutineer.

"You whelp!" he roared, launching a heavy-booted foot at the fireman. "I'll teach you." And Duffy was intent upon swift suppression of the insurgent there in the blackness.

But his foot met an unresisting heap; for Wilson had collapsed at the foot of the ladder, and the force of the kick pitched Duffy forward on top of the fireman, at the same time jerking the rope that ran from his waist to the crew above. The lantern came with him.

"Git up, you dog, git up!" he raged as he extricated himself from the tangle. "Git up, you yellow belly!" And he prodded the inert fireman with his ponderous foot.

A MINUTE or so elapsed while Duffy stormed; then suddenly the hose leaped to life like a giant serpent, while the heavy brass nozzle slewed about savagely through the gloom. An oath escaped his lips and the next instant he was swept resistlessly from his feet by the flying brass sledge.

A stream of water rushed over him, snatching his helmet off as it would a chip of wood, and he heard the nozzle pounding against the ladder. He dared not raise his head, knowing that a single tap from that hurtling death would sprinkle his brains on the barrels. Flattening himself, he dragged his body slowly over the throbbing convolutions of hose that enmeshed Wilson. The smoke was stifling—he was inhaling great drafts of it.

"The old gal's pumping some," he told himself with grim humor, as he felt the hose jumping to the strokes of its mighty heart, Old Sal.

Patiently he crawled across the pulsing coils until his hands found the fireman. Once the sweeping nozzle grazed his back in its deadly flight and Duffy quickly ducked his head between two barrels. He ran his hands over the hose until he located the mass that anchored the nozzle, and then he slowly slid them up the throat of that maddened, artificial python, daring death all the way, until he was within striking distance of the menacing head. A torrent

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of water poured over him—Old Sal was jamming three hundred gallons a minute, with her feed-pipe dangling in the river. Duffy paused for a few seconds until he found a brace for his feet, then he gradually drew himself to a low crouch.

It was a strange foe—a hose-head, murderous, merciless, water-driven—but Duffy reckoned no foe his peer, and suddenly he shot his hands through the darkness and grappled with the wicked head. It tried to throw him off, but his hands seemed welded to the brass; it flung itself against the ladder, but Duffy came with it.

Then he dropped on the struggling nozzle as if he were wrestling with a dragon, his sinewy fingers buried in its scaly throat. Minutes slipped by while he throttled the unruly nozzle into submission, and reservoirs of water washed over him. At last, summoning all of his prodigious strength, the chief pinioned the nozzle under his arm and slowly came to his feet. He thought of Wilson crumpled on the barrels.

"Git up," he gasped. "Git up, you coward!" And he thought of turning the hose on the fireman.

Duffy's breath came fast; his bout with the nozzle in the smoky, oppressive hold had been a serious drain on his stamina, unfathomable though it seemed.

But his words brought no response; and his wrath boiled over at the man who was so utterly unfit for the duty that elbowed him on every hand. Once he thought of leaving him where he lay. He himself could escape through the hatch after he had knocked the bolt back—but what of Wilson, a helpless, smoke-ridden burden of two hundred pounds?

The black hate he bore weaklings, pulings and cowards tempted him to abandon this false-alarm of a fireman to his merited doom in the smoke; but with all the iron of his nature, Duffy was human, and besides there was the "cure." Probably the thick, oily smoke would knife the fungus of liquor-craving out of the fireman. And Duffy took long chances, especially with men; he damned no man until the man damned himself irretrievably.

So he started across barrels in search of the hatch, strangling the nozzle under his right arm, his free hand fastened to the collar of Wilson's rubber coat. Deep in the smoky murk gleamed a shaft of flame red as the streamers of Perdition's pit.

The hose shot its water in all directions, aimlessly, and some of it fell hissing into the fire ahead, sending gusts of scalding steam through the smoke. Duffy labored with almost superhuman strength as he dragged Wilson from the clutches of the hose that enwrapped him like a panting incubus; then with the faint flame for a guiding beacon he headed for the hatch.

From barrel-head to barrel-head, as on invisible stepping-stones, he traveled tediously, hauling Wilson and a lead of writhing hose, while the stream drummed like a riveting-machine on the metal wall of the ship. He lurched to the leap of the nozzle that fought its captor like an animated cudgel, but with Wilson for a sea-anchor the chief steadied himself.

As he neared the side of the ship the stream of pounding water fended him off so that he had to sidle along until his shoulder met resistance while the water sloshed over the barrels. A moment later a barrel-head caved in and he sank to his knees in oil, but clung to the nozzle and the fireman.

He climbed out, cursing, his eyes fixed on the fiery flux ahead of him that seemed to be growing brighter each second; in the lower hold he could hear the oil boiling furiously as in a huge caldron.

The journey along the wall of the ship seemed interminable, taxing him unmercifully to tow a long lead of heavy hose that stretched out behind him like an endless chain; but stout of heart and limb, he pitched ahead through the reddish blackness resolved on finding and opening the hatch. His salvation depended upon going ahead; he could not turn back now. A number of times he was prompted to unburden himself of the limp, worthless load that hampered every step.

As he groped along, the light grew stronger until it became a dull glare that gave him a faint view of the smoky tempest around him. The ten or more yards he had traversed seemed as many miles; the heat was parching, and the hot, pungent oil-fumes seemed to cauterize his throat.

He paused, with the nozzle plunging and threatening to tear loose any moment; it seemed metamorphosed into a giant making a last desperate break for freedom. Duffy released his grip on Wilson, dropped to his knees, and brought all his unmeasured strength into play before he fettered the nozzle.

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The next instant he slipped off the barrels into an open space on the deck of the upper hold where the barrels had been cleared away in front of the hatch. A groan of relief escaped him. He pulled Wilson after him, and then carefully bent over and ran his hand over the fireman's body for the ax—he knew that an ax was needed to drive back the iron bolt that fastened the hatch.

A DEEP growl close at hand arrested his search. From his bent posture Duffy shot his watery gaze into the smoky swirl where two phosphorescent balls glowed at him. His muscles tightened, a quiver darted through him! Suddenly a second red fountain blossomed out in the direction of the ladder, and Duffy made out the dim form of an animal silhouetted in the rosy smoke, its tail lashing furiously, its massive head bent low.

Like a bullet the appalling thought sped through his mind that the lion the skipper had spoken of was at large! Frenzied by the smoke, the beast had broken out of its crate! He had forgotten the animal in the multiplicity of happenings since he boarded the vessel. Now he had a fire-crazed beast to deal with!

Swift to realize the magnitude of his peril, he stood his ground and hugged the nozzle while icy fingers seemed to grip his heart. Yet, old gladiator that he was, victor in a thousand combats with the red demon men dread, his instinctive flush of dismay paled and he made ready to battle whatever circumstances concocted.

Weapons he had none, save the nozzle that fought him like a demon. Yet craftily he determined to pit foe against foe—water against the king of beasts. The light illumined the weird battle-setting and outlined the maddened beast crouched on the barrels fifteen feet away; and hoarse growls reverberated through the hold like thunder above the roar of the flames.

Duffy began to curse in an undertone; he execrated Old Sal to the smallest crank—his way of begging her to pump her heart out for him. He called to Wilson.

"Git up!" he urged. "You've handled beasts, git up and help!"

Like an animal battling for its lone whelp, Duffy stood guard over the fireman sprawled in front of him. A sort of father feeling thrilled him; he loved his men, be what they may. At least he would fight for the man he had led into this place of terrors. Perhaps Wilson was dead; even so, beasts have died defending their lifeless whelps, and besides, if he was dead, Wilson had given his life in line of duty. But Duffy cursed the more and called vainly to the man to aid him.

His gaze never wavered, though the smoke stung his bulging eyes like acid, and he watched the beast, while the hose spewed across the barrels. The scene was satanic! Duffy had never dreamed of the like in his fire-fighting days.

Carefully he aimed the nozzle as he prepared to release its cold fury on his foe, but the lion took the offensive and a moment later catapulted its brownish form toward Duffy.

In a trice the chief elevated the nozzle, and Old Sal's stream, three hundred gallons a minute, with force enough to demolish a brick wall, met the beast in midair like a battering-ram and sent it spinning across the barrels.

An hysteric chuckle escaped Duffy.

"Come on, Wilson," he moaned. He felt an answering stir.

The red glare brightened, the heat was pitiless. But Duffy had little time to reflect, for through the smoke he saw the beast returning to the attack, snarling, and tossing its streaming mane. He caught the maddened glitter of the eyes. It bore down on Duffy like a brown avalanche, and at ten feet left the barrels.

The chief hesitated not an instant but like a master gunner again trained Old Sal's wrath on his foe, and a second time shot the lion across the barrels as if flung from the nozzle itself.

Wilson moved.

"Git up!" pleaded Duffy, his eyes glued on the beast.

But Duffy snapped the words out, for the lion with a roar charged its antagonist. The nozzle surged mightily, almost breaking from the chief's control, but with a supreme effort he aimed it and caught the beast full in the chest, somersaulting it backward.

The lion stood off, flanks heaving, its eyes like balls of fire. Suddenly Duffy felt the struggles of the nozzle lessen. Wilson called out weakly.

"Chief! Chief!"

"Git up, git up!" repeated Duffy.

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THE fireman crawled to his knees and looked out over the red stage.

"God!" he yelled and then ducked.

That moment the lion launched its body like a projectile, but Old Sal's broadside crumpled it on the barrels. Yet Duffy saw that something was wrong—the stream lacked its former battering power.

"Quick, Wilson, your ax—the hatch's behind you!"

For a second Duffy's senses blackened, but a fresh blast of heat brought him to. He was groggy. Dimly he saw the fireman's hand reach into the stream and bathe his grimy face. Ages seemed to loiter by while the lion circled just in front of him. The flames gushed up fiercely—yellow-red torches that lit up the combat.

"Hurry, Wilson!" he roared hoarsely.

The stream fell away. Duffy knew that no power short of a breakdown could make Old Sal play him false when his life depended on her powerful strokes.

The entire hold seemed ablaze. He saw a spurt of water in the flames near the ladder. The fire had attacked the hose! The next instant the hose became limp, and Old Sal's life-blood poured out through the burned gap in the rubber artery. Duffy held to the nozzle and prapared to cudgel his foe.

The chief's senses reeled; the red mist blurred his eyes. Behind him he heard some one hammering at the hatch. Suddenly he felt a hand on his shoulder.

"Down, Chief, down!" and he sank exhausted on his back, still clinging to the nozzle. A rush of fresh air told him that the hatch was open.

His eyes closed, but something seemed to draw the lids up. Crouched on the edge of the barrels just above him was the lion, a cruel, massive statue against the crimson. He could hear the rush of the beast's breath!

The chief gazed backward in his total helplessness, each moment expecting the fangs in his throat. Framed in the open hatch five feet away he saw Wilson, helmetless, the red glare glistening on his wet rubber coat. With wild gesticulations he seemed to be beckoning to the beast to attack him.

Vaguely the Chief wondered at the daring of the man. Was he making a target for the swift spring of the brute? Baiting the lion with his own body?

Suddenly the chief saw a tawny streak in the light above him; his eyes darted after it. At the same instant Wilson dropped out of sight and the lion hurtled through the gaping hatch to splash in the water far below.

Then Duffy lost track of events until a fire-boat crew passed him out and laid him on the deck of one of the fire-fighting craft that clustered below the hatch.

A WEEK later the chief overheard Wilson telling a probationer how it happened.

"That's an old trick, son; learned it when I was in the lion-taming business. Came in mighty handy, but, golly, my nerve warn't any too strong. In the old days I used to tease a beast into jumping at me and then dodge him, but that took nerve such as I ain't got now. Take a tip from me and don't bother with booze—it'll warp your nerve, and besides the old man'll smoke it out of you if he hears about it. I ain't forgot my dosing."

When Duffy returned to his office he took down a record and opposite Wilson's name inscribed the brief history, "Smoke-cured."

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THE MAIDS OF THE *SAUCY SUE*

by ALBERT LEE

OF ALL the songs the poets sing, of all the tales they tell,
There's none that any human heart loves ever half so well
As that which speaks of woman's ways, and deals with woman's wiles,
With woman's wit and craft and guile, and, always, woman's smiles.
These ever conquer man's vainglory, man's sufficiency;
'Tis so all over God's green land—'tis even so at sea.

The Roaring Three were sailing free one balmy day of Spring.
Their hearts were light, their eyes were bright—a most unheard-of thing,
For they were pirates fierce and grim, as every one must know,
Who found their pleasures usually in other mortals' wo.
But on this sunny afternoon they stood before the breeze
Which gently rocked their tidy sloop o'er curled, caressing seas
And slipped her into cradled troughs, where wavelets gently lapped
Her dipping bow, which then and now the glistening spindrift slapped.
And as they sailed thus pleasantly beneath a pleasant sky
They thirsted not for cruelty, or crime, or battle-cry;
They had no thoughts of wickedness, nor any lust for gore;
The milk of human kindness seemed to lull them to the core—
Which really was remarkable, and marvelous to see,
And almost unbelievable of these fierce Roaring Three.
Yet as the lion sometimes purrs and sheathes his cruel claws
And frolics with the antelope, without apparent cause,
So, too, perhaps, a pirate may, beneath the spell of Spring,
Be thawed out of his fierceness and become a gentle thing.
Thus as the sunshine sparkled on the ripples and the sprays
And bathed the glimmering ocean in the glory of its rays,
It likewise shed its luster on each billowed studd'n' sail
That topped a ship which wallowed there across the pirates' trail.
The corsairs saw the canvas gleam, they heard the cordage creak,
In fact, they'd floated now so near, they heard the ship-folk speak.
At once their languid interest from placid rest did rouse
And each glanced at the other one with curious, lifted brows.
For no such accents had they heard on any ships before.
The voices were not gruff and deep; they neither snarled nor swore,
But tripped along so sweetly and so daintily subdued,
Their tones fell quite in cadence with the pirates' gentle mood.
The Roaring Three arose erect, and leaned upon the rail—
To try to paint their keen surprise, the greatest bard must fail;
For what they saw was beautiful and strange and fair and new;
It was enough to cause a Saint to wonder what to do;
For all along the ship's broad side these softened-hearted churls
Were being gazed at gaily by a row of pretty girls!
The pirates doffed their broad-brimmed hats, the maidens waved their hands,
And soon a rope came dangling down. The corsairs seized its strands.
And while they made the hawser fast, the ship's sails fluttered free.
She headed up into the wind, and tarried on the sea.
"Pray, won't you come and visit us?" a girlish voice then cried.
"Be patient, sirs, and soon we'll drop a ladder o'er the side.
"Don't come for twenty minutes, please, we've got to change our clothes,
"And ere receiving guests I must put powder on my nose!"
The Roaring Three were fair aghast at such strange courtesy.

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This was the very first occasion since they'd been to sea
That any one on any ship, of their own free accord,
Had ever thus invited them to kindly come aboard!
"It seems to me," one pirate said, "that since this gentle dame
"Admits she uses powder, that we ought to do the same—"
"Not so!" another quick replied; "methinks 'tis fair that we
"Should meet such gallant confidence with equal gallantry.
"I'm going to my cabin now to comb my whiskers out
"And sprinkle them with lavender, and turn my cuffs about.
"And you two villains, by the Rood, had better come apace
"And join me there with soap and sponge, and wash your hands and face."
The Roaring Three were strange to see when polished for the fray:
Their hair was brushed, their cheeks were flushed, their necktie hues were gay.
Of dust upon their tunics there was not a trace or speck.
When they, in twenty minutes, gaily trod again on deck,
They noticed that a ladder had been lowered o'er the rail
And hung down from the greater ship—a feminine detail—
For not before the present day had they on any sea
Been offered such facilities to aid their piracy.

THEY blithely clambered up the side and staggered at the sight
Of fourscore young and lovely maids in ribbons gay and bright
All grouped there for to greet them and to welcome them aboard
And offer them the best of all the vessel could afford.
No trace of fear the damsels showed, nor any pallid cheek,
Nor did their hearts go pit-a-pat, their lips refuse to speak.
Yet, well they knew who were their guests, the fearsome Roaring Three,
For one was white, and one was black, and one he was Chinee.
And as the villains paused and gazed upon this picture fair,
From out the bevy stepped and spoke a girl with golden hair.
"Dear sirs, we greet you heartily, for wide-spread is your fame;
"There's not a blushing maiden here who does not know your name.
"And, although quite unworthy of the honor, 'tis to me
"The privilege has fallen to acclaim the Roaring Three!"
The pirates bowed most humbly, and the white man stepped before
And thanked the ladies deeply for the honor that he bore.
"But tell us, charming hostesses, how has it come to pass
"The crew of this three-masted ship is every one a lass?"
She leaned upon a capstan-bar, and heaved a gentle sigh.
"It is a simple story, sir, and easy to tell why.
"For, as you know, you stand aboard the good ship *Saucy Sue*.
"She sailed with an excursion from the Isle of Barraboo;
"And pirates overtook us—they were wicked ones and bold.
"They needed men to man their ship. That was the tale they told.
"They took from us our captain—our cook and crew and coin.
"No jewelry or maidens from the ship did they purloin.
"So here we float upon this boat, and yet we feel no fear,
"For seven girls know how to sail, and three know how to steer.
"Now, if you roving gentlemen will come below and feast,
"We'll prove a petticoated crew can entertain, at least!"

SO DOWN into the cabin then were led the Roaring Three,
Where was a table loaded full with dishes good to see.
Each pirate had a pretty maid to sit on either hand
While others served them food and drink—as much as each could stand.
And presently the blue-eyed child who ministered to him
Whose face was white, but battle-scarred with cicatrices grim,
Exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Pirate, do you like this roving life?
"Oh, do you never weary of this wandering and strife?"
The fierce man gazed with tender eyes upon the little maid,
And drew his breath, and wiped his eye, and presently he said:
"It is indeed a glorious thing to be a pirate king,
"To have and hold fat bags of gold, to curse, carouse and sing."
In serious tones he added: "Yet, it sometimes seems to me,
"A pirate's life is really not what it's cracked up to be.
"He has no quiet fireside where he may rock with pride
"A little pirate on his knee, while mama knits beside."
The maidens all looked at their plates and blushed a crimson blush,
And o'er the jovial company there came a sudden hush
Which might have been embarrassing if charming Golden-curls
Had not been quick of wit enough to rise and say, "Oh, girls!

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"We'll ask our guests, the Roaring Three, to favor us in turn.
"We'll ask them to seek Barraboo, so people there may learn
"That we're adrift upon the sea and need a thing or two,
"And ask them to please send us quick a captain and a crew!"
The Chinaman proclaimed at once, "By all Confucius' gods,
"We'll bear your words to Barraboo, no matter what's the odds!"
So Golden-locks then spoke again, and cast a quelling smile
Upon those conquered pirates, who drank greedily her guile.
"We'll give you letters to our kin, the men of Barraboo,
"Our fathers, brothers, cousins, friends, and to our lovers too;
"And they shall take you to their arms, and furnish drink and food,
"And treat you as you should be, for the sake of those you've wooed.
"They'll put you up, if not at clubs (there are none on the isle),
"At least as high as you shall wish, and do it up in style!
"So tarry till the morning here, 'longside the *Saucy Sue*,
"And after breakfast we will toss the mail-bag down to you!"

'TWAS thus that on the following day the pirates' little sloop
Set sail amid the cheering and the waving of the group
Of dainty little maids marooned aboard the *Saucy Sue*,
While they, with many missives, headed forth for Barraboo.
'Twas he who grew a braided queue who first looked at the mail.
The names of those who were addressed quite rightly made him quail.
'Twas "Captain Ketcham," "Nichlas Noose," and "Major Gen'ral Jug,"
"Inspector Pinch," "Judge Stringemup" and "Mister Sergeant Slug";
Old "Dr. Killem," too, was there, and (this one took his eye)
A letter to the parson, to the "Rev. Biddum Goodbye."
"The likes of us," the black man mused, "should fear to be received
"By any such committee as these damsels have conceived.
"I can not say I like their names, their motives I suspect.
"I think the contents of these letters we had best inspect.
"It's not a pirate's business," he then added (he was right),
"To practise social courtesy or try to be polite.
"It's up to him to sink or swim. I move we read these notes.
"Suppose these ladies bid their friends to kindly cut our throats?"
The white man first objected, but he quickly was convinced,
And soon the letters all were oped, and jolly well he winced,
For this is what the curly girl unto her parent wrote.
It was a canny, cunning, little, loving, filial note:
"We're sending you by paquet-post the well-known Roaring Three,
"Whom you, no doubt, will gladly take to decorate your tree.
"Please keep them in a dungeon cell until the *Saucy Sue*,
"With all us girls who send the churls, get back to Barraboo.
"We feel we have the right to ask of you this little thing;
"We're all as anxious as can be to see them when they swing."
The blue-eyed child who asked the pirate if he liked his life,
Wrote this to Pa (it's lucky that the corsair has no wife!):
"Dear Father, will you keep for me the beautiful gold rings,
"The armlet that the black man wears, and several other things—
"The buttons from the heathen's coat, the buckle from his belt,
"And Molly wants the white-man's hat—she says it's lovely felt."
The shock that came the hardest was from her who sang the song.
(The Roaring Three must fain agree the world was going wrong!)
"They're awfully funny pirates, and they've caused us many laughs;
"Before you hang 'em up, please get for me their autographs!"
'Tis plain that there was reason, as the moon rose o'er the sea
That little bits of paper bobbed behind the Roaring Three
And fluttered o'er the oily waves and left a scattered trail
Of what the Roaring Three recalled of glances false and frail.

Of all the songs the poets sing, of all the tales they tell,
There's none that any human heart loves ever half so well
As that which speaks of woman's ways, and deals with woman's wiles,
With woman's wit and craft and guile, and always woman's smiles.
These ever conquer man's vainglory, man's sufficiency;
'Tis so all over God's green land—'tis even so at sea!

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THE ADVENTURERS

by

ARTHUR A NELSON

A FOUR PART STORY—
—PART TWO

SYNOPSIS—A South African big-game hunter and gentleman adventurer, *Alan Severn*, receives from *Norma Raylescroft* a tiny diamond-studded miniature, as a reward for saving her life in Johannesburg. From England comes *Miss Buckerton*, a Kentucky girl, to visit the *Raylescrofts*, and also *"Sherry" Severn*, *Alan's* cousin, who has fallen in love with her.

Alan rushes *Sherry* off on a lion hunt, during which *René Duval*, a friend, is killed. Upon their return a cablegram to France notifies *De Roquemont*, *René's* cousin, of the death.

Frequent visits to the *Raylescroft* home bring *Alan* suddenly to his senses. *Mr. Raylescroft*, the father, will have no penniless adventurer for a son-in-law. He prefers the polished *Lord Chalmes*. *Miss Raylescroft*, the daughter, will welcome *Alan* as a friend, but as a lover—impossible.

Alan determines to leave the Rand. The opportunity comes in the shape of the *Hon. Cecil Rhodes*, who buys the profitless Severn mine and then discloses to the two men his colossal dream of Empire. He proposes that they investigate for him a certain part of the little-known depths of Central Africa, and that with them they take huge *Ingulfa*, *Alan's* servant, a descendant of the Vikings.

CHAPTER IX

CECIL RHODES

"THERE is gold there," said Rhodes, "plenty of it. I have seen fine gold ingots that came from there. Nobody knows who smelted them. The country has never been explored by a white man, although it is larger than Scotland. But the people in that neighborhood are very warlike—pretty much all cannibals—and there are tremendous natural barriers to pass, unknown forests and great mountains.

"Explorers have been very chary of visiting those parts, for it is said that human sacrifice is a custom of the people, though I have no faith in such stories. At any rate Leopold's plans are well laid. He will annex the country if he can."

"And what shall you do, Mr. Rhodes?" I asked pointblank.

"Do?" cried Rhodes. "Do what Englishmen have always done, get in there first! You must take care of that. This district is enormously valuable. England must not be permitted to lose it. And she will if Downing Street is allowed to come blundering into it as usual."

It must be placed beyond the power of Downing Street to interfere, he declared. I would have to proceed warily—yes, obtain a concession from the ruler or king in power, mining privileges and so forth. To clinch matters I could run up the Union Jack and demand England's protection as a British subject. He hardly thought they would be able to get around *that*.

"Of course I shall see to it that the papers for the grants are properly drawn—and iron-clad!" He chuckled in his humorous

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staccato. What was more, he would back me with his private fortune in any sum up to a million. The country once in the British "sphere of influence," and we could safely leave the rest to fate. Fate was always reliable at that stage.

Perhaps he foresaw the usual string of native wars and in the end a great British Federation in Africa, with himself as Dictator of it all—who can say? Yet there was something of the sublime in this man's colossal schemes, unscrupulous as his methods may have seemed, and at the bottom of him an intense and burning patriotism, a genuine love of England, of English rule, English destiny, that was at once exalted and strange.

"And should the Frenchman attempt to oust you then, we will send an army—a strong force at the least—to back you up. You'll be allowed a free hand. By the Lord, yes! God never meant savages to govern themselves."

"And what if the people of that country are not savages at all, or turn out to be semi-civilized like the Abyssinians?" I asked. Was it because I had caught an ironic gleam in Ingulf's inscrutable eyes?

He pooh-poohed the idea. It wasn't possible. What! In Africa? He laughed outright. In any case my fortune would be made. There would have to be a governor for the new crown-colony, or at the least a resident commissioner. When he, Rhodes, gave his word——

His tone was eminently practical. Why, the country was dead in line for his great Cape to Cairo Railway. Think of it—railways — telegraphs — yes newspapers! His voice soared to high falsetto and ran the gamut to staccato. I could be the Great Man. He was content to be the power behind. That was all he wanted. That—and English institutions, English ways of government. Of course his big interests in Africa were not compatible with any other, he confessed frankly.

He waved all this aside abruptly.

"And now, when can you trek?"

"Whenever you like, Mr. Rhodes, and the sooner the better. To be candid, my liking for this place has faded, and I rather fancy the job in hand."

He nodded approvingly.

"Come to the Rand Club and dine with me at eight o'clock. I will arrange for a private room, and I wish you to meet a friend of mine. He may interest you perhaps."

HE WHISTLED up the big bay. We watched him gallop off at a spanking pace in a cloud of dust. Twenty minutes later we were clattering townward in his wake. On the road I seized the opportunity to make a remark to Sherry upon a very delicate subject.

"You seem keen on this up-country trek," I observed, "devilish keen, remembering the odds are long that we may never come out alive. May I inquire if it has anything to do with the Lady of the Golden Hair?"

He laughed ruefully.

"As you are brazen enough to ask, I may as well confess that it has. To be quite candid, whenever I popped, and I flatter myself that I always did it exceptionally well, that girl would simply laugh in my face. When I flared up she would beg my pardon so winningly that I invariably forgave her until the next pop. At last, when I had grown perfectly desperate, I told her out of hand that I should pop no more—no, not for all the golden tresses in America and the prayers of all the *houris* in Paradise!

"I told her that—it was that last night on the terrace, you remember—and it sobered her like a shot, but I stood by my guns. It was time to come away, or would be in another ten minutes. I sat on the lowest step in gloomy silence and wasn't even decently civil. And that girl sat contritely above me in the white moonlight—it turned all her golden hair to tawny orange and her eyes from blue-green to bright purple.

"There she sat and simply looked at me out of those blue-green-purple eyes of hers. And once she cooed some perfectly inane platitude in her slow voice that sounds like the softest tinkle of a golden bell, dropped straight from Heaven. 'Pon my honor, that was absolutely all she did.

"How it could have happened I don't know, but in ten seconds more I found myself kneeling abjectly at her feet. Would you believe it—I was popping as I had never popped before! She listened sweetly until I was all through. Then she went off in a monstrous peal of laughter!"

He groaned at the recollection.

"I looked at her and tried to swear, but something in her puckered face was irresistible and I burst out laughing! We laugh-

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ed like two fiends—laughed till the echoes rung—and brought you both down upon us, as you may remember, full of insatiable curiosity; and then it was too late to mend my broken china."

He groaned again and suddenly cackled, then fell to cackling between groans.

"Next day she actually begged my pardon with tears in her eyes. And there the matter stands. If I pop she laughs, if I don't pop she cries!"

He groaned and cackled alternately.

"So I have given it up in despair until another time. I've but one decent shred of hope. She told me she is writing a book—something in the Persons-I-Have-Met style—and after it comes out, if it ever does, she will try to give me a serious answer. In the meantime I shall inflict the Spartan punishment of absence. Accordingly trek's the word."

This moving tale of the laughing courtship had necessitated checking our horses to a walk.

"Oh, you will be lucky if you ever see her again," I remarked grimly, and I saw his face suddenly go white. "If you are as hard hit as I imagine, you had better chuck this thing now before it is too late." I waved my hand vaguely. "We are going on the tallest trek we ever tackled, and it is quite on the cards that we may both be dead men before three months are over. So take my word for it and chuck it while there is time."

He shook his head.

"It's no use, Alan. I will go!"

We broke into a gallop and I said no more. He *was* hard hit, harder hit than I had imagined. As for myself, I was in even worse case. There was a terrible, dull ache in my heart, that experience had convinced me there was small hope of ever ceasing to gnaw. Ah, well, we had both chosen heroic measures to kill or cure, and it was more likely to be kill than cure.

Doubtless the lady cared as little as I did, one way or the other. I wondered if I should be warranted in writing her under the circumstances if only to say a brief farewell? I was almost minded to do it and fell to pondering on the precise words I should employ. It was a plunge into a lamentable abyss! I had evolved with difficulty a fine-sounding set of heroic phrases, most of them distinctly morbid in tone, which would fittingly premise my departure from everything stable, and correctly inform her of the rate of speed at which I was going to the devil, when I happened to look up and found myself coming into the town.

IT WAS like dropping out of one world into another. There on every side were the symbols of unceasing labor and endless pain; the stress of busy human creatures hurrying so ant-like to their hives to seize the brief respite before tomorrow's sun—half choking the streets; while the long, steady clank of the crushers' stamps beat out its incessant, jarring undertone from the mines, as if to add a grimmer irony to man's little hour of eventide.

Why should I murmur more than these? They too had their sorrows no less than their joys and their toil. No, I would not write, I decided. I would hold my peace—and pass out of her life in silence. That resolve came to me after the reaction had set in.

Presently we turned into the shadowy lane leading to our lodgings, cantering by the disreputable rear-view of a dozen jerry-built frame houses all of them in a shocking state of bad repair, and dismounted at the tall gate of our own house which was the only one of stone in the neighborhood. But inside the place was very cool and quiet and the rooms were spacious and had oak floorings.

I went in and began to take down guns from the rack on the wall without enthusiasm. The first one was a Mannlicher magazine-rifle made in Austria. A pair of heavy English expresses stood just beside it. There was a repeating Savage next to them, throwing the latest explosive bullet, then came four or five business-like Lee-Metfords, the regulation service-arm of the British army.

I took them all down mechanically, one after another, and satisfied myself that they were in excellent condition. Then I put them all back again and fell to dreaming bitterly of something very different from rifles—a woman's face!

TO INGULF the tidings of this new trek and the possibilities which it held out had come like a reprieve to a captive. He had toiled Homerically in the mine and, to do him justice, none labored more willingly than he. But his heart was not in it. He was a fighting-man pure

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and simple. The hot blood of a score of Berserk ancestors ran in his veins, and I had watched his eye kindle while I was handling the firearms in the rack.

At last he could contain himself no longer, and, taking down from its hook on the wall the great claymore which Sherry had given him, he began to play with it in an absent-minded way. Presently he was scouring it with ashes from the fireplace until the long blade fairly glittered in the fading light.

"What are you doing with that murderous thing?" I asked sharply.

He looked up with a blood-curdling grin.

"A man must do something, Baas, to pass away the time," he answered. "I am only cleaning the rust from the steel."

I left him there fondling the great sword in the twilight and went in to dress for dinner, for it was drawing on toward evening and we had agreed to dine with Rhodes at eight o'clock. It was not every night one dined with a Cecil Rhodes!

I found Sherry already dressing in the midst of a great flare of lights. We had, between the pair of us, thrown away a tidy sum for evening-clothes brought out direct from London. After tonight they would be quite useless to us where we were going. Yet it is remarkable what a metamorphosis clothes make in the man. When we had turned ourselves out in them complete and glanced at our reflection in a tall mirror, we might have been a pair of new-fledged millionaires so far as outward appearance went.

WE WERE ushered into a private room of the Rand Club punctually at eight by Stokes, the club's head servant.

" 'E's been 'ere nearly 'arf an hour, sir," whispered that worthy, *sotto voce;* "and 'e sent out for a gorgis spread. My eye! Split me if 'e 'asn't spoke for heverything in the books! 'Eaven 'elp us—and the hextra dry!"

We passed an acquaintance here and there with a brief nod of recognition. There was Lanham's fighting jaw, the tall leader on 'Change, a post which spoke volumes in Johannesburg in those days; and Tilstone, an immaculate fashion-plate sipping a green cocktail, and old Allison of the Bonanza Mine. Their eyes widened into a long stare of surprise as we quietly vanished behind the forbidden door on the other side of which, as they had been at some pains to note, the most famous man in Africa awaited us.

Rhodes was not alone. By him sat a thin, wiry man who kept his head cocked habitually to one side, like a bird's, with an expression of amazing alertness. He was middle-aged and rather jerky, with a rusty, parchment-colored skin all seamed and traced by hundreds of fine wrinkles like some cracked and ancient map, and a tremendous nose with a high bridge—quite the biggest nose we had ever seen on a human countenance. It made him look like some enormous yellow parrot. He had a queer, birdlike mouth—I found out afterward that it was merely due to the loss of his teeth. He wore a pair of huge steel-framed spectacles with bisected lenses. They were without exaggeration at least double the ordinary strength and thickness. Through them his little gray eyes looked as green as seawater. I think he was the most extraordinary-looking person I ever saw. At least he was the ugliest.

One glance at the man's great nose and Sherry had sprung in and seized him by the hand.

"Dr. Eric Ivarsson, by all that's sacred!" he cried, wringing his arm nearly out of its socket.

The lean man winced horribly at first and tried to wriggle out of his grasp. His warped features lit up in a smile that was positively ghastly.

"Slowly, my young friend!" he gurgled. "Hold not so hard—your fingers seem made of steel. *So!* That is better. And what brings you here? Not the service of science nor the spell of dead men's Sagas!"

He mumbled that word "science" very reverently in his bass voice, and a great dignity came into his grotesque face. It gave him a strong likeness to some shockingly bad gargoyle.

"No you do not care enough for dead men's bones! But to Eric Ivarsson they are otherwise—these things, these histories of dead epochs, dead civilizations, crypts, tombs, old scrolls, the silence of buried cities that lie ruined and forgotten in the ghostly shadows of their inextinguishable past!

"Listen, young friend! From England to Africa is a long stalk for the other half of a Saga. But I seek the half they wrote with their swords, not that on parchment. When I have found it I will write such a pamphlet

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it may be, as will consume my archæological colleagues with envy."

Cecil Rhodes said with a slightly ironic smile:

"I hope you may find it, my friend. But you have come to the wrong shop to look for those things. I may say, gentlemen," he added, "that Dr. Ivarsson is my oldest friend at Oxford, who has long since written me urgently to ask for an escort to a part of Africa that he wishes to explore. I fear that he is not a practical man. But how could I refuse an old friend of twenty years' standing? And as our interests all lie in the same region, I had thought that perhaps—but Captain Severn shall decide."

He wheeled round on me questioningly.

"Dr. Ivarsson is welcome to our escort, such as it is," I said stiffly. I did not see fit to mention what we knew, or rather conjectured, of Ingulf and his mysterious origin. But I had my own reasons for being silent; and Sherry, in the cold presence of greatness, found Ingulf's ravings too mad a tale to unreel.

Rhodes too must have seen how mad it was to burden what must be a dangerous march into the unknown heart of Africa with that wizened and ancient gargoyle of an Oxford professor, bent on his crazy quest. That was why he had given me a chance to refuse, but a chance that he had adroitly made impossible for me to grasp.

The presence of this famous archæologist of his would lend the enterprise a pseudo-scientific atmosphere—he knew that too. He, Cecil Rhodes, would remain discreetly in the background. It was all a preconceived design, perhaps. So I reasoned then. There came a day when I realized how vastly both Rhodes and myself had underestimated the professor's powers.

The obsequious voice of Stokes broke in—"The dinner waits, your Hexcellency!"

IT WAS worth remembering, that dinner! Rhodes had ransacked the town. He had unearthed unheard-of delicacies, things that stamp the *bon vivant;* and there in a corner stood a row of buckets full of cracked ice, from which protruded the long slim necks of champagne bottles. The brand was a famous one—dry Monopole. All this princely profusion rather astonished us, for we had heard much of his simple way of life at Groote Schuur. But the man was a mass of contradictions.

He told us some witty stories of his college life, and I was astounded to learn that this man, in the midst of his enormous financial cares and his great undertakings, could still find time to make periodical voyages to England and keep up an arduous course of study solely in order to take his degree at Oxford!

Before he had finished telling them the champagne began to flow like water. We developed a new respect for the professor's powers when we saw him empty two bottles of dry Monopole in easy succession. It seemed to have no more effect on him than so much cold tea.

It was late when Cecil Rhodes arose, holding through the blue cigar-smoke a brimming goblet in his big white hand that never trembled. He looked at us intently as if to probe our hearts, and lifted his glass with a gallant gesture.

"To the new Africa," he said, "and to old England!"

We drank the toast and he handed me two sealed documents.

"One of these is the grant I spoke of. The other is your commission as captain in the Rhodesian forces," he said. "Use it when the hour is ripe. Nothing must appear to emanate from England; in that event you will be promptly disowned. Trek with as few men as possible; too many draw suspicion. One thing more, the Matabele are afoot again—Khama's people are in another scare. But you are white men and they know the white man's retribution!"

CHAPTER X

ENTER RAOUL DE ROQUEMORT, ADVENTURER

IT WAS just after dawn, and the endless sea of rolling landscape stretched away and away in front of us like some titanic panorama made lurid and spectacular by the dropping flashlights of the sunrise. Nearly seven weeks had passed, and the scene had changed from the teeming streets of the big South African gold town to the wild silence of the Karroo—a silence intensified by the weird, droning hum of countless insects and punctuated, at long intervals, by the snake-like hiss of the *sjambok*, or ox-whip, and the cries of the Kaffir drivers.

I watched the great crimson ball of the sun roll up above the far-away mountain-crests, and idly wondered if somewhere out

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in that vast expanse which seemed so peaceful, so silent, and so remote, the red work of the *assegai* was going on? It would be strange if it were not—life was so cheap in Africa!

We had seen the marshes of the Limpopo fade behind us, and for many days had been pushing northward into the heart of the Matabele country. A blight of savagery seemed to lie upon the land like an ancient curse. Once or twice we had passed Mashona *kraals*, craftily perched high up on frowning cliffs, for the Mashona lived in perpetual fear of their remorseless neighbors, the Matabele.

The grim "*Væ victis*" of the Roman conqueror was the rule, and to trek through that country was like walking arm-in-arm with fate. Any fine day you could expect to look in casually on the charred ruins of some raided kraal and see the victors wave you an affable good morning over the ripped-up corpses of the vanquished.

It was unhealthy to meddle in local quarrels, but we counted on the Englishman's proved immunity, which was good as letters of marque anywhere north of the Limpopo River. As Rhodes had said, they knew the white man's retribution.

Why is it that the naked accident of a white skin commands the incomprehensible respect of dark races the world over? We were not many—three Europeans and less than half-a-dozen retainers, to-wit: one Ingulf, or Ingulfa, whatever his name was, who had come from nobody knew where; two Bechuana *voortrekkers*, Makona and Imbete by name, who had served a year together in the Bechuanaland Police; and a rascally Mozambique Arab named Mustapha, whom we had picked up in Johannesburg at the eleventh hour. But we were well armed with magazine-rifles that were the pick of the arms of precision of the world.

Ingulf stuck to the great claymore of Dougall MacDougall; night or day it never left him. He never appeared to mind its weight, which would have been irksome to another in that blighting climate. It might have seemed a ludicrous anachronism, but for a subtle quality of vague ferocity.

Mustapha was a tall, hook-nosed, full-blooded Arab with a pronounced cast in one of his eyes, and a shady past. He had been a slaver in his day—and more. He had drifted down to Johannesburg as a refugee from the dubious justice of Mozambique where he had lately killed his man in a street brawl—some villainous, half-caste Portuguese. I gathered that the provocation had been particularly terrible.

We took him, past and all, because of a single indispensable qualification—Mustapha was reputed to be a dead shot. The two Bechuanas knew how to handle a rifle too, thanks to their year in the Constabulary.

And Ingulf—who and what was Ingulf? To that question even Dr. Ivarsson, who had adroitly wormed from us by degrees all that we had pieced together of his mysterious origin, could return no satisfactory answer. He used to sit sometimes by the hour, nights in camp, and watch Ingulf across the firelight from between half-closed lids as if fascinated, with his head cocked on one side.

But Ingulf's unfathomable face gave no sign that he heeded, and he never babbled in that other tongue of his. What did he know? What vague, inscrutable and martial memories lay slumbering behind that somber mask?

But the dim gray line of the Matoppo Mountains crept nearer. That day we brought up short on the wrong side of a broad river, one of the southerly offshoots of the Zambezi. Westward a shadowy rampart of frowning black cliffs lay upon the horizon. A mile below, the river widened into a great marsh with treacherous yellow quicksands.

How to get across was the riddle we had to read—the river must have been alive with crocodiles. But we dispatched the Kaffirs in opposite directions to look for a ford and, as the day was well advanced, concluded to camp here on the rising ground which Ingulf's practised eye singled out at once as a fine natural position for defense in an evil country.

THE place was a natural fortress backed by the river, its approaches being very steep and its top quite flat and level like the top of a giant table. A ring of huge boulders roughly encircled the summit, so regularly placed at even distances apart that they seemed like grim bastions of some forgotten fort, as if they had been set there by the nameless hands of man.

It would have been futile to conjecture what race of men might have rolled those

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colossal blocks in line, yet it was a position that an army would have found difficult to storm.

In two hours one of the Kaffirs returned with the news that he had found a good ford some five miles up the river, a broad, shallow place with low banks where we could cross without difficulty in the morning. That news set our doubts at rest.

Afterward—for the day was not yet gone—I walked down the river-bank alone, absently picking up one of the rifles as I passed by the wagon. It was a Mannlicher of the military pattern chambering only five shots, but it would serve as a pretense for intending to try for a shot at water-buck. We had noticed the spoor of these animals near the camp; and, without gun-bearer or other supply of ammunition than the contents of a Colt's revolver, I slipped away from the noisy camp, longing only for silence and solitude to stifle the hopeless ache of my unwelcome thoughts.

The black spell was on me again; the reaction had set in, bitter and gray; and the beautiful, starry face that had haunted all of my waking dreams rose up in my tortured brain, mocking me with its trooping memories of other days.

For an hour I went on mechanically, following the river eastward to the fringe of the great marsh, but finally turning aside toward a grassy upland in the distance where I could make out a number of large antelopes quietly feeding along a green slope.

The sight of them awoke my sporting instincts. They were eland—the finest antelope in Africa. Unluckily, what wind there was blew straight to them, and there was nothing for it but to make a long detour.

I began to stalk them deliberately, and at last had worked around to a covert not more than three hundred yards away, when, taking a tall fellow broadside-on, I stood up suddenly and fired two shots into the center of the group.

For the moment the reek of the black powder blown back in my eyes by the wind blinded me, then I caught the short slap of the bullet, as clear as the stroke of a cricket-bat.

At the second discharge, the tall buck had sprung into the air and gone down kicking, while the rest made off at astonishing speed. At this I ran forward to make sure of him, pumping another cartridge into the chamber. But another besides myself had been silently stalking that particular herd of eland, and did not intend to be cheated of his rightful prey.

BEFORE I had got within ten yards of the eland a tremendous roar awoke the echoes, and out of a small clump of bushes on the farther side of me bounded the most enormous black-maned lion I had ever seen, alighting upon the shoulders of the fallen buck. An instant later another lion hardly any smaller came bounding out of a neighboring thicket and stalked up to Number One, where he suddenly paused stock still and stood eyeing the first fellow in a dignified manner, but not offering to dispute possession of the eland

I shrank back dismayed while both lions stood as still as stone. Just then the black-maned one lifted his head and uttered a succession of appalling roars. There was something indescribably majestic in his mien as he stood sounding his grim challenge. The other brute still stood rooted in his tracks, but he now began nervously lashing his sides with his tail.

But it was never the way of the Severns to give up a quarry or to yield an inch to man or beast. At the worst I had still an extra shot, and at that distance it was nearly impossible to miss. And so, seeing what a magnificent target the black-maned fellow presented standing there with his head up, I brought the foresight of the Mannlicher deliberately down on to the center of his mighty chest, let it tremble to a dead rest, and pressed slowly on the trigger.

The report of the shot rang out like a clap of thunder on the quiet air, for the lion had suddenly stopped roaring. The smashing impact of the ball knocked him backward off the eland, but, recovering himself and gathering his mighty muscles together, right up into the air he sprang, straight at my throat. I was horribly astonished—I had expected nothing of the sort.

Luckily I had the presence of mind to bound back a pace, with the result that the lion fell a few inches short. Before he could spring again, I had sent another bullet crashing into him.

That shot finished him! With a last terrific roar that rang in shattering echoes till the air fairly shook, his great head sank—and he was dead.

I had barely time to wheel and throw my

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last cartridge into the breech before the other lion was up and at me. He sprang without warning, out of a dead silence. I had a brief vision of two blazing yellow eyes set in a monstrous brute face, of wicked white fangs and a long tawny form traveling toward me with terrible swiftness, as if thrown by a powerful springboard. He shot right across a twenty-five-foot parabola.

I met him with a raking snap-shot in mid-air as he rose to the apex of the curve. The semi-spherical bullet ranged upward from the flank and traveled clean through him—for the Mannlicher is famous for its heavy driving-power—but it never stopped him. I had used the only shell in the magazine. It was my last shot!

But I knew an old lion-hunter's trick worth knowing — one of those rash but amazingly simple things that men pick up now and again in bizarre ways; outgrowths of a brazen familiarity with death in many forms. Before the echo of the shot died away I had dropped to a crouching attitude and glided a short pace forward, whipping out my revolver.

I felt a blast of red-hot air actually scorch my neck as the lion passed over me, clearing me by not more than four inches! Even then I could have finished things with a couple of shots from the heavy Colt's had not the little god of chance which forever dogs men's footsteps intervened.

In the act of wheeling to fire, my foot caught fast in some tough, creeping vine and down I went headlong among some loose stones. The revolver was knocked spinning. With a short, coughing roar, the lion was upon me, the sheer weight of his enormous bulk nearly driving the breath from my body.

I was conscious, but a dark mist stole over my senses like a London fog of the last density. I seemed to exist in a world of shadows. I could see the twinkling lights of Trafalgar Square flickering through the fog, the dim façades of tall buildings, and fancied I heard the hoarse cries of the link-boys and the whirr of heavy four-wheelers. I had been to London once when a boy, and the grim modern Babylon had left its indelible impression photographed in some forgotten corner of my memory. In this awful hour, at this amazing moment, it all came back!

I lay on my side between the lion's paws. I had no wish to rise. One blow from one of them would have crushed my skull like a rotten egg-shell. I must have known that dimly. Why he did not instantly crunch out my life with one fatal bite at the base of the neck? I could not understand—unless his brute instinct scented peril.

He lifted his head then and growled in a menacing way. There was a moment of absolute silence out of which I distinctly heard a cool, quiet voice saying astonishingly:

"Lie perfectly still, Monsieur, I will fire into the lion's eye!"

A deafening explosion rang in my ears! I felt a swift, convulsive shiver shake the lion's frame. He reared straight up and toppled over backward without a sound. He was stone dead!

I AWOKE from my dream. A man in European dress, carrying a rifle and wearing a pith sun-helmet, had stepped quickly into view out of the long tambouki grass, followed by a second figure similarly equipped but with a swarthy, black-mustached visage—evidently a Portuguese. Then came three gigantic natives with big shovel-headed spears, and lastly a little Hottentot leading a magnificent hound. The leader came straight up to me, glancing quickly to right and left as he came on.

I staggered unsteadily to my feet and held out my hand.

The stranger was a dapper, small man apparently about thirty-five years of age and rather below the medium height, but with a singularly lithe and compact figure clad in a khaki shooting-suit of continental cut. He had quite a grand air, and his gestures were ridiculously polite. He wore a little dark waxed mustache and a pointed imperial. His eyes were dark, too, and he had handsome hands, very firm and white and sinewy. He waved them a great deal.

"*Morbleu!*" he said at length, "so you ran out of cartridges? *Quel dommage!*" He stared at me very hard. "May I ask if Monsieur is much hurt?"

"A few scratches, I believe," I replied briefly. There was really nothing the matter with me. I was miraculously unharmed. After a while I said, "But I owe you my life, you know. I am very grateful——"

"*C'est rien*—it is nothing!" he interrupted hastily. "Raoul de Roquemort needs no thanks for so small a thing. I was drawn here by the sound of your firing; I have a

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camp on the river yonder near the marsh, and was hunting near this place. But you Monsieur—you are ill, I think. Shall I not assist you to reach your camp?"

"It is not far——"

I must have reeled a little. I felt sick and dazed. He passed me his hunting-flask, with the monogram in silver: a double R interlaced, and beneath it the device in Latin, *Ne pro pecunia*. I took a deep pull at the flask. It was brandy, of better stuff than the motto. My strength came back.

It suddenly dawned on me that this Raoul de Roquemort was the French adventurer against whom Cecil Rhodes had warned me—the hired emissary of Leopold, King of Belgium! In the shock of that revulsion I handed back the flask as if the touch of it scorched my fingers. Rhodes had called him "a preposterous duelist"—a ruined gamester. By every canon of common sense the man should have been my enemy. And he had saved my life!

To hide my confusion I turned to look at the lion he had killed. The brute's left eye was completely shattered; the Frenchman had kept his word. He had fired into the lion's eye at fifteen paces with an express rifle.

I looked up and met his dark eyes fixed upon me quizzically.

"Will you honor me with your name, Monsieur?"

I was suddenly ashamed of myself.

"My name is Severn," I said, "Alan Severn."

He smiled very slightly and inscrutably. I wondered what he knew, what knowledge of my mission, of myself, of my secret purpose, that faintly smiling mask of his handsome, cool face concealed?

"I've heard of you," I went on at random. "You're the Marquis de Roquemort. I sent you a cable announcing the misfortune of your cousin, René Duval."

"I received it, Monsieur. And you had my answer?"

"Yes; everything has been kept. There is also a matter of five hundred pounds that was paid to me before we trekked—money that, as things turned out, I did not feel entitled to retain. I have deposited this sum to your credit in the Bank of Africa."

"I can not accept it," he said unexpectedly. "Your feeling does you credit, Monsieur. But my poor cousin was ever rash—of a great recklessness. Why should you be the loser? The money must be withdrawn.

"Poor René. . . . So brave—so fine!"

He shuddered a little and bared his head.

I nodded an astonished assent. The man was rapidly becoming an enigma to me. He seemed quite overcome. It was all very inconsistent, taking him at what he stood for, at what I knew him to be—Leopold's hireling. And yet I felt strangely drawn to him; there was something direct and genuine in his emotion. I began inviting him to come to my camp with me.

DE ROQUEMORT made a rapid sign to one of his black retinue, and the man came forward from the background and shouldered my empty rifle. At a low order which I did not catch, a second black turned and vanished silently in the tall grass. It was easy to see that this man had the born faculty of command. Another native began to skin the dead beasts with a huge knife. Then with Señor Torres, the Portuguese, and the Hottentot with the hound, we made our way to the camp.

Dr. Ivarsson and Sherry stood staring at us from the brow of the plateau, the professor's weird face silhouetted in crimson against the sun. He looked like some frightful Chinese idol looming twenty feet above us. The others stared too; they evidently never had seen any one so ugly. That hideous countenance seemed to fascinate them. I remember to this hour the surprised expressions of their faces. We went up then and I did the honors for the polite Marquis.

Afterward I told them the whole story.

De Roquemort quietly waved aside a dozen florid compliments with a single shrug.

"Ah that!" he said. "The little god of destiny!"

He was something of a mystery—that man. A glamour of adventure, romance, duels, gaming, the love of women, a general devil-may-care gallantry hung about him. I could make nothing at all of his motive when a little while later he made me an astounding proposal. It was to travel in company as far as the Equator; for reasons of safety, he said. He had inquired where we were bound and I had put him off with a cock-and-bull story of central Africa exploration, to which the presence of Dr. Eric Ivarsson lent color enough.

He had a tidy escort of Swahilis armed with Martini-Henrys—ex-slavers I guessed

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at once. United we could bid defiance to anything short of a Matabele Impi, he went on. There was some truth too in what he said.

The upshot of it was that I fell in with his offer. How could I say no to a polite French gentleman who had saved my life? And I had to confess that I liked the man; he was a fine companion for an adventurous trip.

But it put me in an anomalous position. I seemed fated to be jettisoned among a lot of people all more or less mysterious. De Roquemort was a living puzzle. And Ingulf was a human riddle. Sherry too had the secret preoccupation of his love affair; its disappointments, its passages which he lived over constantly to himself and in which he let me have no share. Mustapha, dark, tragic, taciturn, lived apart in a sleepy *kouri*-haunted trance that hinted at unguessed-of experiences which nobody cared to duplicate.

Even Dr. Ivarsson, with his different aims, hopes, and aspirations, and his chimerical quest, was touched with the bar of shadow. The two Bechuanas, sitting cross-legged in the firelight of long evenings, played an interminable native game; nameless, as ancient as the human race; with little cabalistic white bones and meaningless circles in the sand. There was mystery in that, too.

And all these bizarre and unstable threads of opposite lives so strangely brought together faded miraculously at the bare touch of those human necessities which level the most various types of men to a common plane. Even Mustapha lost his tragic air at supper and became a commonplace and rather dirty Arab servant, bolting eland steaks; and afterward an evil son of the Prophet, guzzling forbidden liquors out of a battered tin cup.

DE ROQUEMORT straightened his dapper, lithe shape against the firelight and lit a monogrammed cigaret which he extracted from a handsome gold cigaret-case. He tossed me the case; it had the same double R interlaced which I had seen before, and the ironic Latin motto. I knew the man must have come of a great family to have such things. Why should he risk his life in Leopold's base pay? He smoked a while in dreamy silence. Suddenly he said—

"*Camarades*, have you ever heard of a mountain known as the 'Mountain of the Skull'?"

He had lowered his voice mysteriously.

"I have heard of something of the sort," I said, remembering the sea-king's Saga. "Nobody ever got there. The thing is pure imagination."

"You are mistaken, *camarade*, the thing exists, and, unless I dié, I have sworn to reach that mountain. *Eh bien*, I will not conceal from you that there is something else—a confidential mission; but of that I do not speak you understand. Enough that I kill two birds with one stone. Now, *mes amis*, look at this!"

He unbuckled a money-belt from his waist—a belt heavy with French gold—and from a separate compartment took an object which he handed to me in silence. It was a lump of reddish virgin gold, weighing at a rough guess six or seven ounces. The strange thing was that it was wrought or molded with startling realism into the fantastic sembiance of a human skull.

"Where did you get that?" we cried.

De Roquemort's dark eyes fairly glittered as he answered:

"From a drunken slaver at Beira." He paused. "I have seen Arabs and Arabs," he resumed reflectively, "but never one whose nerves had gone all to pieces like this fellow's. He was all broken up over something he had seen; haunted by a horror. Naturally enough he took to hashish. It polished him off in a week—*sacre!* I was with him when he died.

"Ibrahim was one of my recruits—or would have been if he had lived. The man had a peculiar value to me: he knew more about the dark heart of Africa than any man on the whole coast. He had just come out of the interior—shattered—half-starved—a nervous wreck; and I picked him up gloriously drunk and babbling in guttural Arabic of things that stirred my curiosity.

"I had learned the tongue years ago in Tangier. 'Fiend of Darkness!' he was saying. 'There is one God and Mohammed is his Prophet!' Then, 'Go back! Go back to your pit under the Skull-Mountain—let the Giaour who journeys thither find you there.' He had got an idea in his head that I was going there. I don't know how. It is true that I was looking out for men. 'Worshippers of Eblis,' he said, 'Allah's curse be on your gold!'

"Then he pulled that out of his *burnoose*;

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it is pierced as you see and he wore it around his neck. Afterward he fell in a gasping heap.

"Of course I called some of my men and had him carried away. I put him in a private hut with an old native nurse, hoping he might live to be of service to me, but he didn't. It took him a week to die, and it was frightful to hear him rave. And little by little I pieced his story together.

"He had been off on a slave-hunting trip beyond Lake Rudolf—the farthest he had ever got into the interior—and he had fallen in with a great tribe of 'devil-worshippers' who had a white king. Yes, a white king! He raved of the attack on the slavers which this king led in person, armed with a huge ax. He had a red beard and raged wherever the fight was thickest, crying out terribly in a strange tongue——"

"The Berserk rage!" Dr. Eric Ivarsson broke in with the voice of conviction. "It was the descendant of the Vikings! *The Saga is coming true!*"

The Marquis looked round.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

INGULF was listening intently, and his face wore the puzzled look of a man who is struggling to recall the past. In his eyes the light of memory glowed and faded. A vague, bewildering eruption of many words flowed from the old archæologist. He was describing his excavations in Norway. De Roquemort listened wonderingly, then he took up his tale.

It was a strange scene: the tense group in the blazing firelight; the set faces; the many nationalities; the naked forms of the Kaffirs in the background, with their coarse, cruel, somber, half-brutal faces—all listening to this Jules Verne sort of a yarn from the lips of that gilded, indomitable scion of one of the first families of France.

"They were taken two days' journey to a place walled in by great mountains. At its entrance stood a scarred volcanic peak shaped like a colossal skull. There was some devilish god they worshipped—'God of the Skull.' To that god they were sacrificed—one each day. Ibrahim's turn came last.

"With ropes on a windlass they let him down into an awful pit. He was half-way down before his eyes got accustomed to the semi-darkness—before he saw that the bottom was littered with the bones of dead men. Standing upright in the gloom below was the *horror*—reaching up to clutch him!

"He swooned at the sight and knew no more until he found himself back on the stone platform at the pit's mouth, with the big white king standing over him, angrily cursing the others and pointing to the distant mountains. Yes, the white king saved him—that he might take the tale with him. They tied that thing around his neck and let him go. Six months later he reached the coast a raving wreck."

THE Marquis stared silently into the fire, like one who is lost in reveries. Presently he shrugged his shoulders with a gesture indescribably sad. We heard him mutter:

"The fortunes of my house are broken. The France of the Tricolor is dead . . . I, Raoul de Roquemort, am an anachronism! Even that gold is nothing! Kismet—so be it! There is gold for all!"

A murmur of voices in villainous Arabic came out of the darkness.

"My men have come up," he added calmly.

The new arrivals, who numbered nearly three score, were as disreputable a crew of piratical-looking Arabs as one could conceive, and they had brought with them several donkeys burdened with something long and dark-looking, concerning which their master vouchsafed no explanation. They wore flowing white *burnooses* and carried Martini-Henry rifles, and the word "slaver" was written suggestively on every one of their dark, hawk-featured faces. But they came in peace under the banner of our new ally.

The Marquis looked at us with narrowed eyes.

"My friends," he said suddenly, "you shall trek with me if you choose. I will make you all rich beyond your dreams. *Voilà* I will not hide from you that my motive is selfish—I have a great regard for my skin. As for Señor Torres here, he is in my pay. But you are Englishmen and men of parts, and four are safer than one. In any case our paths all run together. Now look at this—it is the map which Ibrahim drew for me of his route to the coast."

"He had his lucid moments too. In one of them he made me this map. But he never told me what it was he saw down

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there. 'Forget that abode of evil—*effendi!*' he would say shudderingly, and he would rave of all the ghouls of Shaitan. 'Fiend of Darkness!' . . . It haunted him till the hour he died."

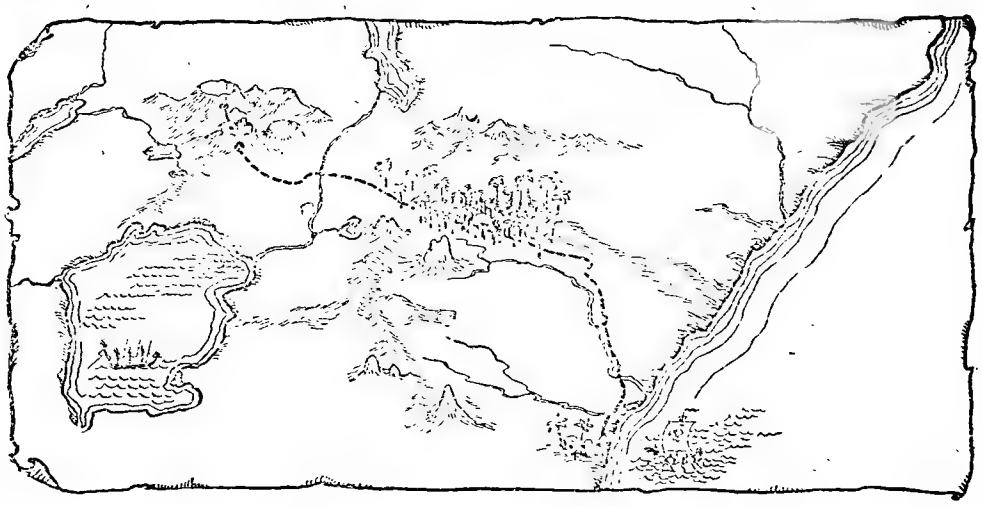
We shuddered.

"The man was raving mad," I said. "The whole thing is some opium-born dream of the Arabian Nights."

De Roquemort smiled inscrutably.

"Ah well, we shall see. Africa is a strange continent, full of queer possibilities."

He took from a compartment of the money-belt what looked at first glance like an oblong strip of the Nile papyrus, but which was in reality nothing but a piece of dried sheepskin, tanned very thin and covered with a crude sketch done with some bluish pigment, of which the following is a fac-simile:



CHAPTER XI

IN THE NAME OF GOD

BY DAYLIGHT I had a look at one of the dark-looking things which the donkeys transported, and saw the ugly black muzzle of a machine-gun. I turned from my investigations in time to meet the easy stare of Raoul de Roquemort, its owner.

"A Maxim," he said coolly. "A little irregular if you like—carrying field ordnance into the territories of a friendly protectorate. *Voila!* 'Tis all beneath the rose!" He laughed candidly. "Ah well, *camarade*, this is Africa, not Europe."

I nodded without replying, and together we turned and watched the sun rising over the Matoppo Mountains.

It was the last sunrise that many of us were ever to see in an earthly sky. For as we stood gazing at the red glory of the scene we became aware that the sunlight was glancing on a moving forest of shining light-flashes in the north.

"What do you make of that, *mon ami?*"

I looked again, and there in the north the bright moving flashes danced and glittered! To mistake its meaning was impossible. I had seen that sight in Lobengula's day. It was the sunlight shining upon a marching Impi's spears!

"It is a Matabele Impi," was my answer, "and if I am not mistaken we are in for something tremendous."

"So I think also," the Marquis said quietly. "What say you, shall we mount the guns?"

In ten minutes both of the guns were in position at the brow of the hill and Torres, who had served on a Portuguese gunboat in his younger days, stood by, with a significant nod to a big coal-black Soudanese. Then the Marquis said a few words to one of his men, and the man presently brought forward a black oblong box, like a dueling-case. It was covered in shiny morocco leather and the gilded crest with the Latin motto was again in evidence. De Roquemort proceeded to open the box while I watched him curiously.

Suddenly the lid flew back and there,

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snugly reposing on their bed of purple plush, lay as pretty a pair of toys as I had ever seen. They were long, keen dueling rapiers made of the finest Toledo steel.

To my astonishment the Marquis selected one of them and strapped it on with the most matter-of-fact air in the world. Then he turned to me.

"Will you have one, Monsieur?" he asked. "Unless I make a great mistake we shall need them soon, and at close quarters they are superb!"

"No thank you," I returned, "keep your toys and take my advice—put that thing back and take a rifle instead. You will find it more to the purpose."

De Roquemort laughed carelessly, but something in his mirth gave me a cold chill.

"Every man to his liking," he said easily. "Mine is for the rapier in a mêlée."

Then he shut the box again with a polite shrug and we turned our attention to the oncoming Impi.

AS WE watched, spellbound with wonder and awe, what few doubts we may have had as to its nature were soon dissipated, for presently the advancing cloud resolved itself into dense columns of dark-faced warriors carrying spears and broad shields of ox-hide. There were about five thousand of them as nearly as we could judge; evidently they had crossed the river at night by the ford some five miles above.

Then, as I looked again, I rubbed my eyes in astonishment, for I had caught sight of the white flutter of a woman's dress amid the dark ranks of soldiers. A white woman!

What would a white woman be doing there? The sunlight glanced from a man's pith helmet. My brain was reeling in a whirl of bewilderment.

A moment afterward I rubbed my eyes again, very hard this time, for the white, fluttering garment out there in the plain was swiftly dividing like the fabled hydra and becoming three instead of one. There were three white women and a white man!

Who were they? Could it mean that they were prisoners? Heaven help them if that was so, for help from us was hopeless. What could we do against a whole regiment of the bravest savages in Africa? I knew the fighting qualities of the Matabele. A wave of pity surged over me—tears unexpectedly came into my eyes, blotting them all out.

But what Impi was this and where was it marching? Many voices arose then in a babel of inquiry.

As if in answer, over the rise to the north there suddenly came plunging a frantic roan horse with the figure of a man in the saddle, clad in the semi-military uniform of the Bechuanaland border-police. He wore a bandolier slung across his shoulders and had a carbine in one hand, and he kept swaying drunkenly in the saddle.

The Impi was coming up rapidly behind him, and even at that distance we could make out the broken shaft of a spear sticking in the man's shoulder, and another in the flank of the horse. He came on at headlong speed up the slope.

By some miracle the man kept his seat as the big roan cleared the rock barrier with an amazing leap; but as the maddened horse reared to his haunches in our midst, he slid limply from the saddle and would have fallen had not a dozen eager hands supported him. The roan horse rose straight up once more with an appallingly human shriek, then convulsively collapsed into a quivering heap. That marvelous uphill jump of his might have won him a steeplechaser's fame in other days; but it had been the effort of a dying horse—he had made his last leap.

Nobody paid any attention to him. A babel of voices in many keys and half-a-dozen different tongues went on around the wounded trooper. Some one was pouring raw spirits between his teeth—the man seemed ready to swoon. Afterward he revived abruptly and sat up.

"Now my man," said I, "your news—quick!"

"The Matabele!" he mumbled. "They are marching upon Bulawayo! Dispatches . . . ran into their lines at dawn. They gave me this before I could get away—" and he pointed to the broken shaft of the *assegai* sticking in his shoulder.

Some one made a move to draw it out, but his face went perfectly gray in an instant.

"Let it be," he begged. "I'm done for anyway. Just give me another sup of liquor—and I say, light a pipe, somebody, and put it in my teeth. . . . It'll be the last pipe I'll ever smoke on this earth—I'm bleeding inside.

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"Those black devils have made some prisoners—three white women and a white man. Picked 'em up at the Zimbabwe ruins, as near as I could make out—man yelped that out as I went through. A regular swell he was. Poor devil! He's as good as done for, and so am I. A blooming swell, too!"

He rambled on disconnectedly:

"Aye, white women, I tell you. . . . Of course they'll attack at once. Ha! What's that—a Maxim? Lord, so it is! Rare spree for you chaps! Wish I could be in it. . . . Ah!"

He began to cough monotonously.

"He is right," De Roquemort broke in with one of his French oaths. "Let the spear stay; he will die the easier. His mind is wandering and he sees an army in the handful here. Let him be, I say; I have seen such things before. He will be dead in an hour."

We gave him some more brandy which brightened him up surprisingly, and propping him against a rock with a lion skin to his back we placed the lighted pipe he craved between his teeth. It was a pathetic sight to see him sitting there resignedly, bleeding to death internally while he smoked his last pipe. In an hour sure enough he was dead as De Roquemort had predicted, but meanwhile other things were in our minds.

THE terrible thought of those helpless women in the hands of the Matabele made our hearts turn sick. We wondered in a vaguely hopeless way who they were. Some party of English sightseers, very obviously, who had been quite unsuspectingly "doing" the famous Mashonaland ruins without a thought of the lurking possibility of being swept up into the terrifying vortex of an unbelievable native outbreak.

Of course they would not be killed—white women were never killed by their black captors. They would know a worse fate soon enough. One shuddered horribly at the abyss which their captivity had so suddenly opened before them. And at last, through sheer necessity, our minds turned to our own peril, for by this time the approaching regiment had come up to within half a mile of us, and we could feel the earth literally quiver and tremble with the tread of their advancing feet.

Presently they caught sight of us, for a deep roar went up from their crowded ranks and suddenly the Impi executed a remarkable maneuver.

Advancing straight forward within five hundred yards of us, they halted dead. By this time, with the aid of a pair of binoculars, we could make out plainly their stern dark faces and martial head-dresses of black ostrich-plumes and crane-feathers. Through the glass we could see that two of the women at least were quite young; their faces and the figure of the third were thrown into shadow. They were all mounted on riding-donkeys. The man with the sun-helmet was tall even beside the tall forms of the savages around him; he was dressed in khaki like a British officer. There was something unmistakably familiar in his indifferently careless attitude of a spectator.

Then a tall gray-haired officer in front of the line, evidently a general, for he wore a handsome leopard-skin cape and an extra-elaborate head-dress, gave a signal and the dense masses slowly opened up in skirmishing order. Out swung two long thin lines in a V-shaped formation so as to enclose our camp, coming up to within three hundred yards this time and leaving us only the river to fall back upon.

We were surrounded!

They halted once more, and several solitary figures came running swiftly up the slope, and ran rapidly to and fro for a few minutes, reconnoitering our position. Then these men returned and reported, and there was a long, inexplicable pause.

Suddenly the Impi closed up.

"Great Heavens!" Sherry said in awe-struck tones, "they are going to charge us!"

For a few seconds it certainly looked as if they were, when, to our unutterable relief, the general in command suddenly issued a sharp order, and the long lines wheeled and began to sweep right past us at a rapid trot. It was a magnificent sight to see that martial array sweep by at the run, all in perfect order, and without a sound except the trample of their flying feet.

"They are afraid of a snare beyond the hill," a deep voice said at my ear, giving me a sudden start. I turned.

IT WAS Ingulf—the light of battle in his eyes! So plainly suggestive was the look stamped on his twitching features that it momentarily fascinated me

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and almost led me to forget our impending danger.

"They have learned wisdom from Lobengula's war," he went on, "and they go to see what lies yonder before they attack. But they will return soon, and in an hour we will all be food for vultures."

I made no reply. I was tensely following the movements of the Impi, and a wild hope had sprung up in my mind that possibly we were not going to be attacked after all—though that was madly improbable. I was aware that Bulawayo lay in the direction which the Impi had taken. Probably its object was to mass around that town in the hope of taking it by surprise, and not to waste time on smaller fry. In that case, time was of the greatest importance to the Matabele.

It was an inspiring thought for those unhappy women; there would be negotiations—perhaps even a sortie by the garrison. There were men in Buluwayo who would have risked it with a battery of field-guns at their backs. But for us to think of attempting such a thing with our force was sheer madness. It would only have led to the death of all concerned. The Matabele would probably spear the captives, once their blood was up.

I was fated to be rudely undeceived, for having deployed by our position and made sure that no ambuscade lurked beyond the ridge, the Matabele regiment paused and rapidly detached ten companies, each of about one hundred men, to attend to us, while the rest of the Impi marched off at a rapid pace without paying us any further attention.

Probably the general in command did not believe it was worth his while to delay the movements of his whole force in order to destroy so few; for in war, among savages as among civilized armies, the main objective is the thing that counts. And off they went, leaving the others to settle with us and rejoin them later.

"There goes the main body," Sherry sung out nervously from a matter of fifteen yards. "They're off for the capital. And God help Bulawayo when they get there!"

I echoed that wish in my heart, though I was selfishly glad to see them go—not but that the odds were still tremendous enough at fifteen to one! About a thousand men were still left to be dealt with, and that was bad enough.

A burst of ferocious deep-throated cheering went up then from the ten companies left to destroy us. And it was not till then that I marked the fact that the unfortunate captives had been left behind with them. They were being herded together into a saucer-like hollow where they would be shielded from gun-fire by the dipping ground, with four armed and brawny savages to shepherd them. And while I was still trying to grasp the significance of this unexpected pass, I saw a single figure step out of the Matabele ranks and advance slowly up the hill.

HE CAME on alone in perfect silence, with an utter fearlessness that compelled our admiration. A dozen rifles were turned on him before he had gone two-thirds of the way, and he must have marked those gun-muzzles go up, yet he never paused nor faltered.

He was a great splendid-looking fellow, with a necklace of lion's claws and his naked chest all covered with scars, and as he came on steadily and swaggered straight up to the ring of boulders with magnificent *sang-froid* we saw that he was no more than a boy. His dark ferocious features grinned at us across the rocks, displaying a double row of ivories as he rolled his staring eyes around the circle in a soldier-like and sweeping inventory of our strength.

"A strong *kraal*, Englishmen," he said with a laugh at last, "yet I have helped take stronger, and if need be we can take this one too. But first I have something to say that may save us the trouble, and also a message to bring."

He paused, and I pushed my way toward him through the circle.

"Speak on," I said in his own tongue, "but be quick; these men hunger for your life and I can not answer for them long. What is your message?"

The Matabele laughed again without a sign of fear.

"My terms first, Englishman, then the message. These are my terms:

"The Inkulu—the general—commanding the Impi has sent forth the word that we must have your guns to fight the soldiers of the White Queen on whom we are making war. Yet as this seems a strong place and we may suffer some loss in taking it, I am willing to give you your lives in return for all your guns and ammunition, otherwise

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we mean to take both. Give up your guns and you may take your other goods and go in peace. Stay, I will throw in that other Englishman—him from whom I bear the message. Refuse, and these companies here, which I myself command, will take this place by storm and put you all to the spear. Which shall it be, white men?"

"Give me the message—and we will answer you."

"True—the message."

He reached behind his ear for his snuff-box, made from a hollowed bone, which turned out to be quite empty save for a small roll of paper obviously torn from a pocket memorandum such as many tourists carry. The message had been written hastily in pencil. This much I had seen when he had handed it over, without noticing the signature.

"Read the talking-paper—and then speak quick, Englishman—see the vultures are waiting!" said the captain with a blood-curdling leer, displaying his double row of ivories.

I read the paper and staggered back, almost overcome by the cold, creeping horror of it.

Dated in the Matoppo Foothills,
on the 4th of March, 18—

Whoever reads this and will take it to the authorities at Bulawayo or Fort Salisbury will be paid two thousand pounds in English money upon presenting this paper at the Bank of Africa. The bank is hereby authorized to pay the above sum without identification, and the authorities are begged to equip a relief party at my private expense to attempt the rescue of the following persons who were captured by the Matabele near the ruined cities of Mashonaland on the 2nd of March:

Miss Alline Buckerton, an American tourist, whose exploration of the Zimbabwe Ruins has unfortunately led to our capture, and her aunt, Mrs. Patricia Rountree, of Covington, Ky., U. S. A.; Miss Norma Raylescroft, of Johannesburg, and the undersigned, of Wigmore Street, Cavendish Square, London, W. I would recommend a relief party of not less than three hundred men, well mounted, taking with them a mountain-gun or Gatlings, with native guides or English officers of the Border Police.

We are now in the Matoppo foothills, about sixty miles due west of Zimbabwe, on the Sabi River, and will head west-by-north after fording the river. The Matabele at this writing have divided their force, leaving us in charge of only about a thousand men, their main body now marching on Bulawayo.

IN THE NAME OF GOD.

ROBERT PIERS CROYDON, VISCOUNT CHALMES.

I read on swiftly to the end; then at last the writing blurred and swam before my eyes, and for a moment I reeled. I reeled as if I had been suddenly taken with a stroke! I suffered in that moment the literal and convulsive clutch of death at my heart. And no death could have been worse than this white-hot anguish of love.

"IN THE NAME OF GOD!"

All the uncertainty—all the impersonal element, as of shipwrecked people whom one hears of and pities immensely but does not really know after all, was swept away like a calcined veil, like a mesh of cobwebs. *She* was there—in the hands of those dreadful savages. *In the name of God!* It was the most horrible of life's surprises. And Chalmes, too; he had written his message to civilization with characteristic coolness, but he had broken down at the end.

"What is it, man? Who are they?"

Sherry had pressed to my elbow, his face white with excitement. The others were crowding round jabbering all at once inanely. Only De Roquemort remained calm as a frozen image, but there was a light in his eye that belied his coolness. I thrust the paper into Sherry's hands, and, as he read, saw a slow shudder run through him and his face turn a sickly gray.

"Good God!" he groaned. "What's to be done?"

"Fight," I said, "unless——"

I pulled myself together and turned to the savage, outwardly cool enough. My wits had returned to me and I had been thinking swiftly.

"And the women," I managed to say carelessly, though my heart was thumping horribly against my ribs as I spoke. "You throw them in also, of course?"

"Not so," the captain replied, frowning, "that can not be—the white women must stay. They are the bait with which I must hook some chiefs who have not yet joined us in this war," he added with a leer, "who are sitting still in their *kraals*, where I mean to take them as soon as we have settled with you. Be satisfied with what we offer. Give up your guns before we come and take them. What is your answer, Englishman?"

"Let these men answer for themselves," I said, and nodded meaningly to De Roquemort, who turned to his men and spoke to them briefly in Arabic.

The Arabs listened, staring. Then a derisive, guttural laugh ran down their ranks.

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Fatalists to a man, they were ready to die with the magnificent "Kismet" of the Koran on their lips—but they would trust their lives to no man, black or white. At that low, guttural laugh, the herald's dusky features flushed with rage, for he had read its meaning in many a dark, sneering face.

"You have their answer," I said significantly, "and this is mine—that Englishmen do not purchase their lives at the price of their women's honor. Go!"

The Matabele laughed ferociously.

"So be it, white man," he cried, shaking his broad spear. "We will fight it out. Farewell—the hyenas laugh last!"

WHEN he had gone the Marquis turned to me coolly.

"Remarkable savages, these fellows! And now, Monsieur, it is time to say our prayers." His lips moved inaudibly. I stared at him in astonishment. He was in fact actually mouthing a prayer. Then I heard him say, *"Quelles bêtes! Et moi, je suis manque. . . .* What an end!" He laughed slightly. "Come, we may as well die hard, Monsieur."

He walked off alertly, and in the next three minutes he was everywhere, putting new heart into the men.

Fortunately the Impi was very short of fire-arms, though they possessed a few old rattletraps passing for guns, for the British Government had been peremptory in forcing Lobengula's people to disarm at the end of the last Matabele war.

For our part we could muster some sixty-five men armed with rifles, and the supply of ammunition was practically unlimited—we had upward of fifty thousand rounds. After all, though the odds were tremendous, we occupied a strong position, which would take some fighting to carry. The giant's table commanded the plain on all three sides, the river being the fourth; and it was up this rough, rising ground that the foe must come through a raking cross-fire.

On the other hand, if this position were once rushed there was nowhere to flee except into the river and the jaws of the crocodiles. And we had no fancy for being forced back into that river.

Strong hands dragged the heavy ox-wagon to the only gap in the great ring of boulders and wedged it fast; and in my heart I thanked the fate or providence that had led us to encamp there instead of in the plain, though it had been an unheroic labor, done on the day before to the crude accompaniment of a wicked chant of curses from the sweating Kaffirs, above the great, dumb heads of the patient oxen, and the pitiless lash of the biting *sjambok*.

At the rear we had ranged the uneasy, shuffling, strangely friendly beasts of burden. They could smell death in the air. They would serve for a buffer between ourselves and the river, to which on that side the plateau fell sharp and sheer.

Torres, the Portuguese ex-gunner, stood by one of the Maxims, and the giant Soudanese, who had been a cashiered artillery-sergeant in Egypt, was told off to the other machine-gun. In addition we had five men armed with spears, Ingulf, and the Hottentot—who was of no account whatever. He sat huddled in the rear trembling horribly—a picture of abject fear.

I looked down upon the grim black mass of men below, standing rank on rank in their soldierly array, all so stern and quiet in their perfect discipline—the quiet of the lull before the storm—and shuddered, for I knew that when their blood was up those black soldiers spared no living thing.

I wondered how many of us would be alive when that day's work was done. Afterward I drew out a miniature from my bosom and kissed it silently. Try as I would, I had never succeeded in tearing her image out of my thoughts! For me she was still the one perfect woman, the high and flawless ideal; and the ruling passion is strongest in the shadow of death.

The knowledge that she was somewhere out there in front of me—a helpless, impotent captive—only intensified my longing and my love. How could I abandon her to such a fate? But even as the thought leaped into my brain, that one of us must try to make a dash for Bulawayo, I saw that it was too late.

Again the thin, crescent-shaped nippers, like the horns of a gigantic beetle, were being thrown swiftly up the flanks of the rising ground. A single glance at the yellow mud-banks of the river, dotted by a hundred grim sentinels, told me that avenue was hopeless. No man or beast could pass that water and live. Below the marsh the quicksands glittered in the sun. Everywhere else we were held fast by a ring of steel.

Aye, it was too late! So I kissed the

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lovely pictured face again and put the miniature away. Then I took up my station and waited for the attack.

CHAPTER XII

THE FIGHT OF THE GIANT'S TABLE

THE attack was not long in coming. The captain of the thousand, who by his leopard-skin cape could be easily distinguished in front of the Matabele lines—being in fact the same reckless gentleman who had demanded our surrender—had adopted at once the tactics of the gray-haired old Inkulu who had commanded the Impi in the first place.

I saw all at once the flanking lines breaking up in waves at the base of the rising ground like surf upon the beach, and then I saw a sudden massing of men at the horns of the crescent, as they took a formation three deep. The whole movement was effected in business-like silence. The Matabele had merely waited to get their nippers into position to crush us, and this accomplished, with a long roar from a thousand black throats they charged straight up the hill in a triple line from all three sides at once.

They came on at a fast trot, their fantastic head-dresses standing out almost straight behind them as they ran, which gave them a most devilish appearance. They seemed like horrible apparitions. Withholding our fire, we waited in ominous silence. They were in splendid range, but still we waited, for De Roquemort had settled it to give the signal at the proper moment with a rifle-shot.

On they swept until the triple ranks of fierce set faces were up within a hundred and fifty yards. Still he withheld the signal. Presently they had lessened this distance by half. No sign yet! Seventy yards, sixty-five, fifty, forty—was he never going to give it, I asked myself, and then—*boom* went the Frenchman's heavy rifle.

"*Fire!*" he sang out, and I saw the Matabele captain fall as if struck by lightning.

Instantly a waving spurt of flame crashed out along the whole semicircle of our line. At that range the effect was terrific—nothing could stand up before it. Men went down in front of it like ninepins. I saw row on row of grim black faces rise to the level of my eyes and the next instant swept away like Autumn leaves in a November gale. Four times we fired into the dark mass of men, and the machine-guns tore four great gaps in their ranks, but they closed up instantly and the rush came on.

But the Maxims crashed out again—their rush never reached us. Once more we blew them away with a storm of death. Down went their leader—a tall man with a black feather head-dress who had taken the dead captain's place—shot through the chest; but another chief instantly stepped forward into his place. Down went numbers of both rear lines, and down went whole dozens of the first rank like corn before the reaper, some of them spinning over and over down the hill until they brought up short against the living bodies of those who were advancing from below.

It was a hell-blast of destruction! But the hearts of those black soldiers were as strong as oak. And on they came like the grim dogs of war they were, leaping over the bodies of the dead and the wounded, staggering through the hail of bullets and actually up within fifteen yards.

AT THIS point I began to feel most horribly frightened. Was nothing going to stop them? I wondered. Fifteen yards more—and then the dreadful ripping-up process, the closing scenes. I glanced around and there at my elbow, his grotesque face all atwitch with the fighting spirit of his Viking ancestors, was Dr. Eric Ivarsson blazing away as fast as he could empty the magazine. To see that ancient man of science coolly engaged in potting benighted savages with a Lee-Metford rifle was something to remember.

We waited for perhaps ten seconds for them to mass and come on again before we stopped them with another withering fusillade that, for the moment, turned the scale in our favor. Then from behind me I heard Ingulf's voice—

"They waver—aye, the dogs flee!"

Then I saw the charging lines sullenly roll back down the hillside in confusion, leaving more than two hundred dead and dying men behind them in the dreadful shambles from which they were evidently glad to escape for the time. But at the foot of the rising ground they formed up again just out of effective range, and we knew it would not be long before they would hurl themselves at us once more. And who could say what the issue would be then?

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At close quarters we were no match for them, and not a man of us but knew they would charge again and again until they struck home. What if they managed to rush us? Even the dark faces of the Arabs blanched beneath their bronze at the thought of what would happen to us then, and many a fighting son of Islam called upon the names of Allah and the Prophet under his breath.

Presently after a brief lull the Matabele officers ran to and fro, closing up their lines. Then with a hoarse roar of fury they leaped forward again almost as one man. As they came they shouted out their wild battle-songs in a perfect gale of bass sound that absolutely defies description; while the sun's rays played with a weird effect on the tossing spears, and the wild rush surged forward like the long roll of breakers on some sullen coast.

Before a man could count fifty they were half way up the hill again. We met their rush with a terrible storm of bullets, and the Maxims sent their rain of death right into the thick of the press of men, plowing a new and more dreadful path among them, as fast as they could close up their shattered ranks. In less than five minutes the whole hillside was a hell of mangled and dying men. And out of that awful inferno of carnage came a swarm of naked black figures leaping at us with a roar, through a shadowy canopy of smoke.

We let them come on to fifteen yards and then we raked them with a sweeping cross fire as a north wind sweeps down a field of withered corn.

In their packed formation the result was appalling! Nothing short of an army could have withstood that sort of reception. Once more the Matabele reeled back under that staggering fire and began to fall back in disorder on the plain, until the range grew ineffective—though almost all of the stragglers were put out of the action as they retired.

Had their front ranks lived through that charge, this chronicle would never have been written; for the guns had literally grown too hot to handle, and the bandoliers of the Arabs were for the time being all empty. But we had wiped out four companies—nearly half their force!

No wonder the foe paused at last to close up their disorganized ranks and gather heart for a final onset, while we on our part seized the brief respite to open fresh ammunition-cases and get ready to receive them if they charged again. Up to this time we had not lost a man, but if the matter ever came to the hand-to-hand stage we knew that our chances would not be worth a broken sixpence.

THEN from his station on the right I heard Sherry sing out suddenly in awed admiration:

"By George, they are actually going to try it again! Here they come!"

It was a solemn fact, they were; and it was impossible not to admire the iron discipline that could send those splendid savages up to their certain death, as coolly as if they had been a lot of soldiers on parade.

At last the affair began to look frightfully serious, for by this time their blood was up. The battle-madness was on them at last—the awful lust to kill—and little they recked of the death that lurked behind the white men's fatal ring. This time they meant that the white men and their Arab allies should all die with them and make an end of it all.

But the Matabele had learned a terrible lesson none the less, and for this supreme effort they were wise enough to change their tactics. Spreading out their lines in an irregular open formation, like a monster letter U, they came at us in this shape at a jerky but rapid run, so that our fire, while very destructive, lost much of its effect. This enabled them to reach and pass the fifteen-yard dead-line with a loss of not more than seventy or eighty men; for heavy as our fire was, it failed to stop them.

Men fell thick but still others sprang forward into their places undismayed, and, in the face of all we could do, the rush came on unchecked. In vain we threw down our smoking rifles and emptied our revolvers into the ferocious, grinning faces, dealing death and wounds with nearly every shot, for at that distance it was almost impossible to miss outright. In the teeth of everything, the Matabele began to mass together for the final swoop—and the last rush had begun!

It was hand-to-hand now, and before five minutes had elapsed we had lost as many men. If they ever broke through our ring we were as good as doomed.

There was a sudden, short lull; then the fight closed in. At this critical moment

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Ingulf rose to the emergency like the sea-king's reincarnation. With a roar he threw himself into the mêlée, armed with the great claymore of Dougall MacDougall!

I saw him hurl himself upon those brave black lines and hew a bloody path right through them to the other side. Then back he raged like a lion at bay, and cut another red furrow, beating down foe after foe; and every time the great blade of the claymore hissed through the air a man fell where he stood.

Before its crashing sweep the ox-hide shields of the Matabele were like so much tinder. I saw men's heads go spinning from their shoulders to fall a dozen feet away. And as he fought he shouted out his battle-cries in a barbaric tongue, until, as I watched him, I thought of the steel-clad warriors of another age.

PRESENTLY a tall chief armed with an ax and an iron-backed shield rushed up with a shout and engaged him. One stroke of Ingulf's blade cut through ax-haft and arm, and another bit deep into the Matabele's skull. As he stepped over the fallen man Ingulf stooped and picked up the shield. At this, crying out that a devil in the shape of a huge man had broken in among them, the soldiers immediately in his front, whom the hail of bullets had failed to daunt, broke and fled like sheep from the slaughter before this new and terrible weapon in the hands of their gigantic foe.

So they were cleared away on the right and in front, and we gained a breathing space. But on the side of the giant's table where De Roquemort was posted, immediately to my left, the issue still hung wavering in the balance, though the Arabs were making a gallant and stubborn resistance. Fortunately for the defenders, the space available for fighting was so limited that only a few of their foes could crowd upon it at one time, although the pressure from below was terrific and threatened to sweep them all over the bluff into the river. As for the Marquis himself, not in all the space of my days had I ever seen a man fight as he did—or with a more appalling calm.

He had thrown away his rifle now and was using only the rapier, but his use of it and his incredible *sang-froid* proved a revelation.

In the hands of the little Frenchman that slender and apparently insignificant but fatal strip of steel was gruesomely transformed into a thing of fear. It seemed as swift, as erratic, and as continuously in motion as a humming-bird on a flower-trellis, and quite as hard to follow; and it lent itself to his purpose as if instinct with life and reason.

And the man himself—who can hope to picture him! I had seen men fight hand-to-hand for their lives many times; but never before had I seen one who smiled so astonishingly while he played with death.

He glided to and fro with almost feline swiftness, springing now here and now there, tireless, sure of foot, and all but Argus-eyed—there was something positively uncanny in the way he would glide backward out of reach of the short stabbing *assegai's* futile thrust, and then back in again and under it straightway with his remorseless yard of steel.

Presently he would pink his man in a vital spot, and, springing over his body, instantly engage another adversary who would finally go the way of the others, when the Marquis, with the same cold deadly calm, but always smiling his familiar smile, would turn his attention to a new antagonist. No wonder his singular tactics proved so disconcerting to his bewildered foes, for really it gave me a shiver to watch him. I saw him put that amazing toy through five men in the little while that he was near me, before the swirl of the fight took him out of my view.

Then suddenly the tide of battle ebbed away from us for the moment, leaving the whole space clear; and, before any one could stop him, Ingulf had sprung across the gap and made another lion-like rush, hewing down every man in his path.

His Berserk rush was made alone.

There was no support—our five gallant spearmen who had stood outside the rock circle were all dead and ripped up; and the French adventurer with the devil's courage, who also had preferred to take his hand-to-hand mêlées where there was room to swing a weapon, had already regained the rocks unharmed; but his aid would have been too late. I heard the breech-blocks of the Martinis snapping like castanets along the line; the Arabs had seized the diversion to reload. Then from Torres, at the machine-guns, rose a sudden cry:

"Back Señor—quick! To the rocks!"

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INGULF heard the warning just in time, and, still keeping his front to the foe, began to run backward swiftly. Torres depressed the muzzles of the guns.

In twenty seconds he was behind the rocks in safety, and the Maxims began to sweep the survivors from the brow of the hill. Then the Martinis commenced to spit volleys into them, and, before another minute had sped, the Matabele were utterly demoralized, and there began a scene of carnage that was enough to haunt the memory.

The last man to fall on our side was Mustapha the Arab. All through the fray he had displayed the indomitable courage of his race, and, as it chanced, was kneeling to open a fresh case of ammunition when just as the last rally of the foe was beaten back one great warrior who had disdained to flee from the white man's ring, carried away by his martial ardor, cleared the rock barrier at a single bound and landed fair upon the shoulders of the ill-starred Arab. It was a desperate thing to do and it cost the soldier his life, but before any one could raise a weapon the Matabele had driven his broad spear home.

It was the *coup de grâce!* Mustapha rolled over dead without a groan, and, ere the soldier could strike another blow, De Roquemort's rapier was through his throat and he too fell down and died. It was all over in ten seconds, and in another minute the Matabele were in full retreat.

We had won the day, and as they fell back in confusion the Arabs raised a wild cheer and leaped upon their flanks like tigers.

THE rest was butchery. Less than a hundred and fifty blood-bespattered men reached the bottom of that hill alive, and for twenty minutes or more the plain reëchoed with the crash of rifle shots as the Arabs, whom it was utterly useless to try to restrain, remorselessly turned the last scenes of the battle into a massacre—the old penalty for employing half-savage levies ever since war has been the fashion.

But swift as they were to follow and kill, they were not quicker than I in that first wild rush when our turn came to attack. As I dashed on blindly, making for the spot where I had marked the captives guarded before the battle, I soon left them behind, and presently the bullets addressed to our foes began to sing wickedly about my ears. Then the drumming tattoo of footsteps coming up steadily behind me, and not to be shaken off, forced me to wheel, revolver in hand.

It was Sherry, running with his hands low like a professional sprinter. As he pounded up, I waved my hand silently toward the vanishing flutter of a white dress twenty yards off to the left. He nodded—and then, above the broken fusillade of the Martinis and the awful yells of the Arabs, we heard a woman scream.

The sound lent wings to our feet, and together we swerved toward the cry and dashed forward at redoubled speed. As we ran, a cold lump rose in my throat at the horrible thought that we might be too late, and my heart seemed bursting in my ribs with the tremendous physical strain. Yet thank God we were in time to witness a terrifying *tableau*, and to interfere with its fatal conclusion.

What we had taken for a hollow "pan," at the distance of five hundred yards, was the bed of a shallow watercourse, hollowed out in the rainy season by a vanished torrent. In the *kloof's* mouth, huddled up together against a rough spur of the crumbling red sandstone, the three frightened women were grouped in a posture of despair—they might have been posing for a composition designed to typify "Horror." Their black guards, with ruthless determination stamped on their brutal features, were in act of advancing to spear them.

Just in front of them stood Lord Chalmes, unarmed, but with his guard up like a boxer's, and at his feet the sprawling, rigid figure of the savage whom he had just knocked down. How he had contrived to do it and avoid the Matabele's spear passes belief, though it may not have been a difficult feat for the man who had knocked out the "Auckland Spider."

The guards, seeing the day was lost, meant to murder the prisoners and escape down the *kloof*, but they had been held in check for the moment—they had hardly looked for so effective a resistance from an unarmed man.

The man whom Chalmes had hit lay unnaturally still—the blow must have been a fearful one. The others had been thunderstruck momentarily. They had never seen a man knocked out clean with a fisticuff.

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Then they advanced with uplifted spears to finish their work.

I saw the rest of the drama being enacted swiftly before my eyes. We had come up to them—abominably out of breath—just as the final scene was about to be played out. The two young women screamed again as the fiends advanced on them and lifted their spears. The other one covered her face with her hands at the sight of the cold steel, and stood convulsively shuddering from head to foot.

But Chalmes, possessing himself of the fallen man's spear, had thrown himself upon the foremost of the guards, and the next instant they were striking at each other in that unequal game, to which, though the Englishman was quick as a cat, there could be only one end.

That was what we saw—then our revolvers rang out together and both of the would-be murderers lay gasping out their lives upon the sand. I had no compunction in killing the third man from behind like a dog; it was no time for the niceties of warfare. At the echo of the shot he threw up his hands and fell down abruptly.

IT WAS Lord Chalmes and not I who received Norma's swaying figure in his arms as she relaxed all at once and suddenly reeled when the danger was past. And I, feeling like a spectator of something unapproachable and forbidden, stood watching them without a word to say. I was *de trop*, I saw; and then, as I noted Sherry supporting the American girl with an arm thrown brazenly round her waist, I resigned myself to the task of soothing her aunt, a handsome, fragile-looking woman of forty, with a profusion of very black hair, very big black eyes, and a superbly slender figure that many a girl of twenty might have envied.

That was Mrs. Rountree.

She was quite hysterical, and began thanking me in rather high-flown, stilted phrases that sounded as if they had come out of a paper-covered novel. I learned from her that the men of her party had stopped over at Chimoyo to attend a dinner given by the officials of the new railway—one of those lurid, brandy-and-water affairs at which women were not expected to be present—while the ladies, with Lord Chalmes in the rôle of protector, had gone on ahead to see the ruins.

Alline's impatience to explore a real ruined city had led to that arrangement. The men were to have come up on the next day. Nobody had anticipated any danger—they had been politely assured by all the very polite Portuguese Dons that the war scare was a chimera. It must have seemed horribly unreal to them when, as the ladies were riding out to the greater of the ancient sun-temples on their donkeys, an army of black men, rising out of the ground like the fabled soldiers of the Dragon's Teeth, gobbled them up!

Lord Chalmes had acted very nobly, it seemed. Witnessing their capture from the camp, he had ridden out and let himself be taken, wishing to protect the women, when he might easily have escaped unseen. But your thoroughbred British "swell," your gilded Life Guardsman, commonly does that sort of thing in just that way—it runs in the blood.

It struck me that the savage he had felled was lying strangely still, and I went up and turned the man over. There was a great purple blotch as large as a teacup round his ear. He was stone cold.

That sudden blow, planted in a vital spot with the strength that only the red fear of death may arouse, had been almost instantly fatal. The man had died even as he fell, probably from concussion of the brain.

"He's dead," I said wonderingly, turning around to Lord Chalmes. "You've done for him. Look at that purple blotch, man—under his ear."

"Dead, is he?" his lordship's languid voice said without any show of surprise. "I thought he might be, you know, for I meant to kill him."

He began coolly adjusting his monocle.

NORMA had slipped from his arms, blushing furiously. She came up to me at once with both hands outstretched—very beautiful and pale; there were dark rings around her eyes. I faced her rather stiffly, recalling that day when she had virtually given me the cut direct; but she appeared to have forgotten it wholly or quietly ignored it, so wonderful are the ways of woman.

"I owe my life to you again," she said very low, giving me her hands. "It was brave of you to come to us in the midst of your own peril. You seem fated to turn up

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always in time to be my guardian angel, Alan!"

I was in a daze—in a dream! I could scarcely credit the evidence of my senses. That was the first time she had ever called me Alan. The name, rippling from her lips, fell upon my ears like a golden strain of music. And she was holding my hands—pressing them softly!

But I knew it wasn't real—couldn't be real, for of course she was going to marry his lordship—and the music was forbidden music. I had no right to return a liberty that clearly belonged to another; and so, with a very red face, I dare say, I stammered a few words about there having been no risk at all.

"No, no! That is not true! You know it is not!"

I said that I didn't wish to be made a hero of.

"Once on the docks at Sydney I saw a man killed by that blow," Lord Chalmes was drawling, "and I remembered it, begad! Capital row up there. We saw it all, you know, and by gad, sir, Omdurman was a parade-ground to this! Lord, how your machine-guns smashed those beggars up! And you came out to us through all that? . . . You're a cool one, a devilish cool one, Severn."

He stared hard at me and added:

"And a rum crew you've got. Ah, look at that, will you!"

He pointed out in the plain. The Arabs were closing in around the remnant of the Impi, scarcely fifty men, who had made a last stand upon a little mound covered with green-sward.

Suddenly we saw the remorseless white line coil in around them like a great snake, and then we heard the sharp, steady roll of their gunfire begin to sound a broken dead march out of a drifting pall of smoke.

The firing lasted for barely five minutes, and when the smoke had cleared away we saw only a dark heap of corpses where they had stood. After that grim episode only a stray shot at intervals told of some wretched survivor being hunted down and killed, for no quarter was given, the wounded being ruthlessly shot.

Presently it was all done—the foe was wiped out, and even those red-handed sons of the Prophet had their fill.

"We must get the women out of this immediately," Sherry, coming up close to me, whispered, "they can't stay here, you know, and the donkeys are ready."

He had found them safely tethered in the *kloof*, and with them the camp dunnage, including Miss Buckerton's precious notebooks and her portfolio of sketches.

"We must have them up on the hilltop somehow, though they won't like the sights they will see on the way."

So we started at once. It was in truth a sight to mar a soldier's dreams; and the women rode with pale faces and averted eyes, up through those gruesome shambles where the dead lay all knotted and tangled together in bloody heaps, with hideously huddled limbs, and their staring eyes upturned to the placid sky.

CHAPTER XIII

"TREK!"

WE WERE masters of a stricken field. All around lay dead men in groups and knots—men lying in every conceivable attitude where they had fallen, just as death had overtaken them. Most of them lay riddled with bullets in a long ridge of corpses, not ten spears' length from the top, and the hillside in front was black with them.

Still others lay in tangled heaps on both sides, many of them actually inside of our ring, and several were headless—the work of the fatal claymore. But there were no wounded among them, the Arabs had seen to that. Stark and cold they lay, their sightless eyes staring up into the peaceful sunshine that kissed their dead faces with a sad and awful irony; a terrible monument, I thought, to man's bloody works.

Out of seventy-two men we had lost sixteen, and hardly one of us but would carry some scar to our graves—except the Marquis. By some miracle he had escaped without a scratch, although his sword-arm was stained crimson up to the shoulder, and he did not even appear greatly fatigued. The man seemed to possess a steel-strung frame.

But Ingulf was a sight to see, as he stood leaning on the great broadsword, grimly surveying that fatal field in silence. Both he and his weapon were literally red with gore, and the blood was streaming down him from many assegai-cuts about the body and limbs, though they were mostly flesh-wounds and would soon dry in the sun.

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Sherry had two ugly gashes through the thigh and forearm, and Dr. Ivarsson had received a wound in the face. Torres was unhurt, but I would limp for some days to come; and two men were badly wounded, both of them dying within the hour.

Every one of our five spearmen, among whom were both of the Bechuanas, had thrown himself into the mêlée and died fighting to the last; they were no match for the Matabele at that game. None of the animals were harmed, but the canvas wagon-top was ripped and gashed in many places by the flying spears.

The Hottentot was dead too; fate had managed to find him out. And at the back of the open space an extraordinary spectacle met our eyes. Propped up against a rock with his head sunk slightly forward on his chest, but looking remarkably life-like, and with the short pipe still clenched firmly between his set teeth, sat the ill-fated trooper quite dead. Poor devil! He had smoked his last pipe!

Of the Arabs ten were dead, but they had exacted a red revenge. Most of De Roquemort's following were men who had been slavers in their day; and whatever their faults may have been, these fellows were dauntless villains. He had equipped them with Martini-Henrys at Beira, and how well they knew to use such weapons that day's work bore a convincing testimony. To their deadly marksmanship and stout hearts, and to Torres's cool handling of the machine-guns, we owed it that every one of us was not buried beneath those tangled lines of brave men who now lay so still and stared up so unwinkingly at the brilliant face of the sun. That thought came home to me as we stood looking down in silence at our dead foes.

"LOOK!" De Roquemort said suddenly.

There was horror in his voice, and as he spoke a swift circling shadow passed across the sun. The next moment there was a sudden rush through the air and a great bird had settled vampire-like on a corpse lying in the plain below. Far up in the blue other evil shapes were marshaling. From somewhere close by—it was impossible to say precisely where—echoed and reëchoed a sudden burst of brutish, half-human laughter.

"The Gild of the Air and the Earth," Sherry said significantly. "The vultures and hyenas announce their Anniversary Banquet in Matabeleland on the 4th of March. Notable public function, as the *Times* would say; unlimited *éclat* and so forth. . . . Ah well, we have given them a royal feast——"

He was running on, when the Marquis stayed him with an abrupt gesture.

"They were brave foes," he said in his quiet way.

We understood what he meant; and to me at least the remark was a sheer surprise; for it struck me as singular that a man who could go into a life-and-death struggle wearing a sweet smile, and come out of it with a sweeter smile than he wore when he went in—a man who smiled so blandly while he drove his steel remorselessly through human hearts—had shamed us with his fine and thorough chivalry toward a fallen foe. It was a trick of the man's high birth and perfect courage that one resented even while one admired it in despair.

In truth I was beginning to respect that man, for all Rhodes's dark hints of his questionable past and the double game he seemingly played. And if it came to that, how should the pot call the kettle black?

But it was high time to think of burying our dead and getting out of the locality before some other war-party, of which there were doubtless more than one afield, came up and added our corpses to the already sufficiently gruesome collection of the slain. The presence of so many dead would be sure to provoke inquiry in more than one quarter, and we had our own reasons for not caring to court publicity.

And for me there was also the possibility that I might be pressed into the Chartered Company's service until this war was ended, for I carried a captain's commission in the Rhodesian army, while that resourceful Frenchman went on indomitably alone to pull King Leopold's chestnuts out of the fire. And I knew how dear this project was to the heart of Cecil Rhodes; how he would publicly ignore but secretly condemn, and how his great soul would chafe when the Belgian's sordid Protectorate triumphed, and Leopold became the master of Central Africa. Those dead savages became a menace that neither of us could afford to leave.

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OUR own dead we buried first, in one long and shallow grave which we dug on top of the hill, and we piled up a flat cairn of stones to keep the jackals away. The Marquis's ready wit had veiled these rather ghastly details from the unaccustomed eyes of the women with an extemporized screen of heavy canvas which insured them enough privacy to put themselves to rights. But they must have guessed what was going on from the obvious sounds of the grave-digging.

Then we set to work to get rid of our late foes by way of the river. We knew the swift current would carry the bodies down to the great quicksands of the marsh below; they would vanish beneath the shifting sands, and no man's search would ever resurrect them. What few stopped by the way the crocodiles would devour, and so by a bitter irony their tribal name of Matabele, which in plain English means "The Disappearers," would be brought to fulfilment.

All their weapons we gathered up and threw into a deep pool, save one or two which we kept as mementoes of the fight. And so in a day or two there would be nothing left to mark the fray but a nameless cairn and a few whitening bones in the plain.

On the hilltop, under an awning to shelter them from the sun, the wounded men had been placed under the merciful care of the women; but Lord Chalmes, who had quietly offered his services, worked like any Kaffir with the rest of us in getting rid of the dead. If he wondered why we were wasting precious time in clearing a field so soon to be abandoned, he made no comment, doing his share of the work manfully and with a physical strength that drew from the Arabs guttural words of surprise as they looked at his lean frame.

I saw him single-handed heave up the body of a tall dead warrior—which I recognized as the corpse of the soldier who had done for poor Mustapha in the last charge—and hurl him over the cliff-side to the swift waters below, where he fell with a mighty splash and vanished. Presently he bobbed up again a long way farther down, on his way to his final resting place in the quicksands.

It was a strange, wild task, as we toiled like Titans for more than two hours in a tropic sun; and both of the wounded men died before it was finished, and were buried alongside of their comrades.

When it was over at last, we had breakfast—an unbelievable breakfast of tea and potted tongue and Cooke's biscuit, and afterward actually a bumper of mellow champagne of which his lordship had boasted a rather dazzling supply. We had found three of the cases in the *kloof*. The Matabele had been carrying them along for two days, meaning them for the chiefs whose price for joining the war was to have been the white women; the native idea of a *quid pro quo*.

The Arabs, grouped apart, ate wolfishly with their fingers, washing down their repast with rum and water in tin cups. One saw that the Koran did not at all trouble them. They were a lot of great villains—*lazzaroni*—the scourings of the Mozambique coast; there were scarcely a dozen prayer-rugs among them. But no braver band of scoundrels existed, and they had all that strange loyalty of the desert's children for those with whom they have eaten salt; even for "the little Giaour," as behind his back they dubbed Raoul de Roquemort, their master.

THE Giaour himself, below his iron coolness, was in the very deuce of a quandary for once, though the ladies never guessed it as he politely bowed them to their quarters with a gallant air of easy unconcern and a careless word aside as to riding-clothes. But as soon as they were out of earshot he turned on us in chagrin that he could not conceal.

"*Mon Dieu*, gentlemen, what folly! Grand ladies—and a trip to the devil knows where. It is unhappy, but what would you have? I am pledged to an affair . . . any fool sees that. *Morbleu!* one does not carry machine-guns for a holiday!"

He nodded ironically to Lord Chalmes.

"No, not for the lilies of France, Monsieur. I can read what is in your mind; you are wrong," and he laughed a little.

Suddenly he grew very grave.

"So you see, my lord," he said, "I can not give you an escort; I can not play false to the Power behind. . . . Look you, fifty men would be too few. And where would you go if you had them? Bulawayo is surrounded, the whole country is in a state of war. You would be mad to tempt fate again, Monsieur. A watcher in one of those villages on the cliffs could bring an Impi down on you before you had gone two days' march; and then—well, this part of Africa

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is no place for a white woman now, my lord."

"You mean that we are cut off from the coast?" Lord Chalmes said after a little silence.

"Exactly that, Monsieur."

"But we can not go west into the desert, you know, nor south in the wake of those beggars!"

"Aye," I broke in impatiently, "and we can not stay here and take root! We must get out of this. Let us strike out for the Zambezi."

So for a precious half-hour, while the sun mounted higher in the sky and the vultures wheeled to and fro above the quicksand, we remained irresolute, and it was Chalmes who settled the matter at last by saying in his cool drawl:

"We must make for the Zambezi and try to get on to Quilimane, you know. Come, gentlemen—trek."

"TREK!"

Something strangely potent in that word, seized and hungrily tossed along by voices in many keys, stirred the camp like the breath of the north wind. They knew it well, those dark brothers-in-arms, brethren of many a slave march of other days; and as if by magic it awoke the camp to action.

The Maxims were unlimbered swiftly and loaded upon the donkeys, and presently the long line of men swung out across the plain with the ox-wagon bringing up the rear; while the ladies, very fetching figures in khaki and gaiters, the last London cry for the tropics and the shooting-season, rode well in the van by the Giaour's order.

Mrs. Rountree, with all her forty seasons resting lightly on her fragile shoulders, looked like a slip of a girl in her short riding-skirt and wide hat; she had quite recovered from her terrible shock of the morning. The American girl, her niece, had in the saddle the superb swing of a cavalryman. She rode with keen interest in her surroundings, a ready bow to the inevitable; while, in the earthly heaven of a lover's paradise, Sherry kept pace with her on a wiry Basutu pony—and the boy was stiff with wounds!

But he had found his romance again, so strangely here in a splendid world of deeds that he too had borne a share in better than he had ever dreamed. So what did wounds matter to that? But I had lost mine, I saw, with a bitter smile and a dull catch in my throat; for, riding just ahead of them, Lord Chalmes—was it by accident—was paired off again with Norma; and so Mrs. Rountree fell to me.

I found in that fragile woman an unexpected quality of brave endurance. She bore up wonderfully, even after we had forded the river at midday and pushed on steadily without a halt till nightfall. We went on again an hour after moonrise, making a forced march for safety's sake through all the long night, but no complaint ever passed her lips. Even now, when I think of that weary night march, I wonder at that frail lady's fortitude.

The gray light of the dawn was breaking in the east when we halted at last, and presently the sun came up over a wild waste of rocks edging the desert and revealed the welcome sight of a green patch of velvet sward, growing where a crystal spring gushed and overflowed at the base of a sheer line of basalt crags that ended in one tremendous mountain-spur. Swiftly the word to halt went round, but quicker than it could travel, Raoul de Roquemort, bowing low in his gallant courtier fashion, was at Mrs. Rountree's stirrup, helping her to dismount, with a new light of admiration in his eyes.

"Ah, madame," he said, "you have shown us a lesson in fortitude that is difficult to forget!"

She answered him only with a brave smile, but as she attempted to stand alone a quiver of imminent collapse ran through her shapely figure, and I thought she would have fallen at his feet; but his strong arm was instantly passed around her waist with the prompt decision of a man who knew his articles of war where women were concerned—especially pretty widows; and so for a few moments more he stood supporting her. I walked away with a low whistle of astonishment. Here was another romance in the making.

FOR the next three weeks we pushed on to the Zambezi. We had been obliged to leave the wagon and oxen behind with a friendly chief in the Manica country, taking only the spare mounts and the donkeys with the Maxims. It was almost a gift outright, as we should probably never return to claim them; but they must have been abandoned in any case sooner or

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later, for we had entered the belt of country haunted by the tsetse fly, that amazing insect whose fatal secret forms not the least of Africa's grim enigmas.

Then at last one day the great river lay stretched below us, its yellow tide flowing forever to the sea between marshy shores where hippopotami sported in the reeds, past reeking mud-banks where the crocodiles lay in sinister relays waiting sleeplessly for prey, with their hideous dull eyes always wide open in the blighting sunglare.

Far away eastward, miles downstream, the shores receded into nameless lagoons—the "backwash" of the Zambezi—fringed with the magnificent, treacherous lush vegetation of a great African river, and alive with the booming of wildfowl.

Lord Chalmes pointed to the farther shore.

"Look there," he cried, "a *dhow* moored to the bank! If gold will buy that craft and her masters, the thing is easy. We can go down river in her to the coast, you know, to Quilimane."

The Marquis spun around with his ironical smile, and said in a tone full of meaning:

"Do you think so, my lord? Harkee, I do not agree with you there. You forget that Quilimane is six hundred miles from here by river, and the darker fact that the slave trade still flourishes here, for all your British men-of-war. Remember your cargo —*camarade*—white ivory. . . . Not pleasant to think of, eh, Monsieur?"

His lordship's face fell at this.

"But you could give us a guard!" he cried.

"To be sent to Paradise! Come, Monsieur, must you be convinced?"

HE BECKONED to the leader of the Arabs, a powerfully built old man of fifty named El Zanek, with something sinister in the fixed stare of a pair of extraordinary eyes set too far apart in his yellow face, like a falcon's, and a great livid blue scar—an ancient saber-cut —running the whole length of his left cheek and jaw. He had been Tippoo Tib's left-hand man in the old days, and was himself one of the greatest rascals in Africa on his own account, although, strange as it seems, he had the Arab's loyalty to his salt.

De Roquemort, pointing to the *dhow*, held brief conversation with this man in the Swahili tongue, and an odd silence fell.

It was broken at last by El Zanek.

"For the fidelity of those here I can answer," he said meaningly. "Are we not as brothers? But for those whom they would meet — who can tell? There are many *dhows* of the slavers that ply the great river, and the English gunboats at the river-mouth are careless now. The secret slave-marts of the Great on Earth would bid a king's ransom for the white *houris*, and the gold of Stamboul reaches across the world. Kismet! Kismet! Allah is great, and these things are appointed!"

Lord Chalmes, listening with a crestfallen face, swore audibly.

"Right-O!" said he. "Begad, you know, it wouldn't do—the cursed yellow devils! I'll have a famous wigging for my lords of the Admiralty over this. But what is to be done?"

"Nothing," De Roquemort said blandly. "You must wait and trust to fortune. We can beat off any force of natives, and the honor of these ladies is safe with us, though I grant it seems a little hard on them."

He laughed, and out came his inexhaustible cigaret-case.

"That, Monsieur, is not without its compensations for us. But I give you a gentleman's word that when this business is done with, I shall myself escort them safely to the coast. Will you have a cigaret?"

Chalmes suddenly said point-blank—

"Will you tell me where we are bound for?"

"That is my little affair, Monsieur."

"Curse your little affair!" my lord flashed out to that.

Then he wheeled sharply on me.

"And you," he said, "with your air of secrecy—you with your picked-up gentleman's veneer, and God knows what you have up your sleeve—may I ask where the devil you are bound to?"

I felt the blood mounting to my temples, but I only laughed exasperatingly in his face.

"Wait and see, my lord!"

He gave me a probing stare, then without a word walked moodily away to seek enlightenment of Dr. Eric Ivarsson. He got little out of him, at all events, for the old archæologist, launched on his pet topic of the sea-king's Saga, prattled away madly, to his lordship's sheer amazement.

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THEN we hailed the *dhow*, which ran up her lateen sail by way of answer and crept across the river. She was a big raking craft, manned by half a dozen evil-faced Arabs led by a tall man with one arm. He stood upon her poop and shouted orders to the steersman in bastard Arabic. He handled her ably enough against the current, landing a matter of fifty yards below us.

El Zanek swaggered down with us; it developed that the two were old companions in crime—they had run cargoes of "black ivory" together when the slave traffic was in its palmy days. And the *dhow's* presence would save us the trouble of fording the river.

The tall man proffered his *chibouk*, and they began haggling in the Arab fashion. It was beautiful; they were past-masters of the art. The *dhow's* captain had a shade the better of it. He was a superb liar. He, "Captain Hafid," was an honest trader in ivory, and the master of a sea-going craft—Allah forbid that he be ferryman to the unbelievers! No, by the beard of the Prophet, it was useless to ask! El Zanek raised the price craftily by inches.

Finally it was settled; De Roquemort's money-belt shed gold-pieces till Hafid came around to our way of thinking, and in a little while the air was full of curses as the unwilling donkeys were driven up the *dhow's* gang-plank.

By three o'clock we were over, with the Maxim guns and donkeys, and the *dhow* had made two trips. As the old line of march was formed, I saw Lord Chalmes's jaw set hard under his tawny mustache; and once more we turned our faces to the fateful and enigmatic north. He was very plainly puzzled, though he would not let it show in his face.

Hafid, from the *dhow's* gunwale, threw a long stare hungrily ashore at the women, and for an instant his features worked convulsively in the swift transition of a man suddenly off his guard. I knew that for them he would have murdered us all without a qualm of remorse. But we were too strong for him, and he knew that. He remained standing there motionless and sinister, in that attitude, with that blaze of unutterable, primal passions stamped on his evil face, for another half-minute. Then when I looked again he was gone.

RIDING alone behind the Maxims' convoy, I glanced back later to find Lord Chalmes unaccountably missing from his place in the line of march; but at length I caught a glimpse of his white pith sun-helmet bobbing back in the rear. He was doggedly keeping to his task of cultivating the company of Dr. Eric Ivarsson, that babbler on the long-dead past.

What had he learned? And after all, what did it matter? Then from behind me I was electrified by the sound of a voice whose indefinite sweetness still held for me its never-failing thrill.

She—of course it was Norma—came up to me at a smart canter, and pulled up alongside. She had been using her spur. Then, quite unabashed, she said with her slow smile:

"Would it flatter you, Mr. Severn, to learn that you have been missed? Really, of late I have almost grown to think that you have shunned me. May I inquire why?"

"His lordship is an indefatigable watch-dog," I said with a candid touch of bitterness. "He is always in his box."

She laughed.

"Then I am glad that he has forsaken it for once, for I wish to ask you a question. Is it true that we are going with you to the Equator?"

"I suppose so," I said, nonplussed.

"And in fact a little farther?"

"Er — well, yes," I admitted to that. Then I pulled myself up with a jerk. "I can not tell you where we are bound," I said. "Believe me, I regret that fate has blindly made our road yours—for it is a road of peril. But it is necessary for your own safety."

"Yes," she assented quickly, "I know all that. It's very chivalrous of you to burden yourselves with us—rather fine." She looked at me with introspective eyes. "And I know, too, that you dined with a very famous gentleman before you ever started."

"I was not aware that my humble doings were of interest to any one," I said maliciously, "much less yourself."

For the first time then she colored up suddenly like a schoolgirl. But in her next words, with a woman's cleverness, she was explaining it all away in a perfectly natural, matter-of-fact voice.

"Don't misunderstand me, pray. You were seen with the Premier himself; such

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things always go the rounds, you see. I suppose it is another of Mr. Rhodes's empire-building schemes? You need not trouble to deny it, sir! But the other, this bland gentleman with his Maxims and his pirate crew—what part does *he* play in the plot?"

"He never told me," I replied, "and the curtain has not fallen yet."

"Then I will tell you now—the emissary of the other Power. But *what* Power, Mr. Severn?"

"You must ask him that," I suggested, smiling.

"And so I shall," she answered quietly, "some day."

"Do!" said I. "He's extremely communicative!"

We laughed together this time; once more, for the fleeting moment of the present, we stood on the old footing of the oddly intimate past.

"Like yourself?" she smiled back at me then. "Well, we won't quarrel over what Power. At least it is some Power wise enough to choose for its emissary a brave man, Mr. Severn. Oh, I am positively smitten with him; he's the politest villain I have ever met off-stage! And you? Really, I trust you've considerable discretion mingled with your valor? So the plot will be interesting—diamond cut diamond! I sincerely wish you very well, Mr. Severn. And—I'm backing you against the other Power!"

THERE was a vital undercurrent below her words that thrilled me; the invincible creed of race. Only a woman's marvelous confidence in the idols she has reared! Often they are clay-footed idols; but the blessed confidence, the unstaggered hope, is always there!

I bent over suddenly in the saddle, looking straight into her eyes.

"And if I win?" I said tensely. "You——"

"And if you win?" she repeated very low, "I—ah, no! How can you ask *that* of me—now? I can not say what you would wish me to! But win—if you can!"

"Win what, my masters?" a mocking voice inquired, and I recognized Miss Buckerton's unique drawl.

She had descended upon us in her unceremonious way, dragging Sherry in her wake. So the grim little gods of lost opportunities stepped in again.

"What are you two conspirators plotting?" she cried amused. "And what game's to win?"

"Why the game of love!" I flung back gallantly with a quick change to a gay bantering tone. "Isn't that the only game worth winning? And we were plotting, I think, a grand Sweepstakes to include yourself."

She gave me a singular look, and laughed.

"That is an apt answer, Mr. Severn," she said. "At least the wilderness has not dulled your wits. But leave me out of your Sweepstakes until we get back to civilization. Wedding bells do not ring well in a jungle. And yet all this is glorious—gorgeous! I'm perfectly content with it."

"And it'll all come out in brevier—I've yards of notes. Dr. Eric Ivarsson has opened a perfect mine of mystery. 'We will follow the sea-king's Saga. . . .' He says—'Across the Equator we shall find it—*so!*' Ruins, he insists, that are like no other ruins this land ever saw. Sometimes he seems to think the ruins won't be so ruined. As for me, I am a Simon-pure adventurer and I say: 'Lead on Macduff! On to the Unknown'!"

On to the Unknown! Poor child! Could she have realized the immensity of the journey before her, a journey of more than a thousand miles, and foreseen its hundred perils—had she but glimpsed its gaunt specters of hunger, of thirst, its nameless fears, and the nerve-shattering, haunting sense of isolation from the comfortable outer world, that monstrous gulf of separation, like the unbridgable chasms that appear in dreams, she might have whistled a different tune!

For it is that way with African travel, as with polar exploration. A party of venturesome people strikes boldly inland from the coast, and presently the great black heart of the continent opens and swallows them and they disappear. Weeks, months, years elapse before they finally emerge—if they ever do.

Then some fine morning, over your coffee, you pick up your crumpled copy of the London *Times* or the New York *Herald* and wonderingly read that Captain Polestar, the noted Antarctic explorer, or Dr. Anthrax, the famous discoverer of Mount Inaccessible, has "Come Back from the Dead"—or words to that effect. And of course you join in the general thanksgiving. For the point is that too often they never do emerge!

TO BE CONTINUED

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SPANGLES and SOAPSUDS

A MISS DEMONSTRATOR STORY

by C. HILTON-TURVEY

SHE WAS as airy as a mote in a sunbeam, a bit of thistle-down in a breeze. Her spangled skirt was a mere inconsequent frill, nothing more. When she danced she tilted her head to one side, as one who listens for a sound from another quarter. This gave her already impudent scrap of a chin a still more impudent lift. But it was fetching—there wasn't a doubt of it!

Miss Demonstrator, watching from the wings, sized up the little dancer as a lightweight—light at both ends. Her hair was a yellow fluff, short and wavy. She was all slim young curves—the curves that just escape being angles; and her smile over the footlights was engagingly naive. She had only enough voice to "balance her act"—a little, clear, fluttery voice like the trilling of a canary; but her dance always "got across"—which as everybody knows is a stage synonym for success.

Miss Demonstrator, going her professional "beauty" rounds in the company, heard tall tales of the little dancer's ways with the Johnnies who haunted the stage-door. From what the other members of the show said, "Little Spangles" was both rapacious and unmerciful with her "crushes," and as shrewd as a young fox. And she weeded out all who were not financially up to the pace.

A faded young man with every sign of having gone the limit in revelry seemed to be the favored one. He was wealthy and open-handed, which was the best that could be said of him. He was slightly bald; his face was lined with dissipation; his fingers stained with a perpetual cigarette. Nervous, lean, with the eyes of a dead fish, he made a strange foil to Little Spangles, with her bright gray eyes, her red lips, her abounding spirits and youth that spoke in every lithe movement.

The show was a light novelty called "The Scarlet Moth." They were playing Spangles' home town in a two weeks' engagement. The star, a massive blonde worn out with the grind of the long season, welcomed Miss Demonstrator's ministrations; and as usual the little vender of toilet specialties made friends with every one in the show, and came and went as she pleased.

"I tell you," said the star one evening before the show, "this company is as safe for a young girl as if we had a chaperon

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along. We've enough of a financial backing to cut out 'angles.' Our musical director keeps an eye on the girls night and day; a girl can't stay up till morning boozing with the Johnnies and put up good stuff the next performance. If he hears of a girl going on to any extent, she hears from him. Hot stuff, too!"

Miss Demonstrator bound the towel about the star's head and pinned it tight at the back.

"How about Spangles?" she asked curiously.

The star made a gesture of impatience.

"That kid's as slippery as an eel!" she replied. "Never can catch her in anything. She's a sly young-one, and she covers up her tracks till Satan himself couldn't find them."

Miss Demonstrator laughed, patting and smoothing out the lines in the fair, plump face.

"That Ed Deggers has a pretty plain crush on her," she observed.

The star shrugged her shoulders.

"Little Spangles winds him 'round her fingers," she assented. "But so far as any one knows, she's never even dined with him. And she shakes the cash out of him—um-hm!"

"She's fond of flingin' green wads to the breeze, then?"

"If a dollar ever got away from her without a struggle," affirmed the star solemnly, "none of us know it!"

"You don't say!"

"She sewed every separate spangle on that dancing frock she wears in the first act—every one! Just to save the difference in price, she bought the spangles by the pound, and lugged the stuff along wherever she went. On my word!" protested the star, "she got on my nerve—sewing even in the trains, when we were on the road that first week; she hardly stopped to eat or sleep till they were all sewed on. That's how she came by her name—Little Spangles."

There was a knock at the door.

"Is Miss Demonstrator here?" asked a flutelike voice.

"Yes," the star responded. "Come in!"

Spangles stood a moment on the threshold. She was clad in a velvet coat whose fur collar met the droop of her scoopy little hat, and whose furred hem hid all but her absurd little feet in their trim shoes. The fluff of her yellow hair was hidden beneath the hat. Only the big gray eyes with their dark lashes appeared in the rosy face with its impudent nose and saucy chin.

"Oh," she begged breathlessly, "won't you come into my room when you're through, and tell me what to do with my hands?"

"Why, yes, I reckon so," Miss Demonstrator returned, adding with a smile, "You seem to know pretty well what to do with your feet."

The vision of velvet and fur departed. They could hear her trilling in the next room, like a bird trying its voice.

When Miss Demonstrator entered, Spangles was sitting on a newspaper spread out on the floor, putting on her tango slippers—pale blue kid with stockings that exactly matched. Her slender arms and shoulders were bare, and she was twisted up in an acrobatic sort of way, tying the ribbons.

"See!" she exclaimed, reaching up one small hand to the masseuse. "Can you do anything with such hands?"

Miss Demonstrator stooped and took the tiny fingers into her own.

"Great snakes!" she ejaculated, running the tips of her fingers over them. "What do you do with your mitts, anyhow? Lay bricks when you're off stage, or do buck and wing dances on 'em?"

Spangles snatched her rough little hand away and sulked a moment. Then her chin went up.

"I asked you a question," she announced with dignity.

The vender of beauty threw back her head and laughed in her jolly way.

"So you did, you precious infant. Well, here's the answer. Cut out whatever's playin' hob with your pinkies; wear gloves when you sleep, with some hyper-excellent cream I'll give you for a consideration. You'll have lily-white pads in a week."

Spangles sighed, spread out her hands and looked at them rebukingly.

"Well," she said resignedly, "I'll use the cream and wear the gloves; but—" She frowned and left the sentence hanging in the air.

"Cut out the wing and buck, too," Miss Demonstrator advised, twinkling a little. "I can't promise you much if you don't. You've a couple of jay paws for sure!"

She dived into her bag as she spoke and drew out a dainty jar and a beribboned bottle.

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It was at this juncture that the beauty-vender discerned in the saucy little face turned up to hers a sprinkle of brown freckles that the make-up usually hid—little country freckles. Now, though it wasn't a bit professional, the masseuse had a sneaking regard for these blemishes—they looked "human an' honest."

With this thought in mind, she smiled into the gray eyes and the gray eyes smiled back. That was the beginning of the friendship between them; for though Spangles's cold-blooded behavior left much to be desired, "the kid had good stuff in her."

Miss Demonstrator had curious standards for her affection. People might be good, bad, or indifferent; but if they were likable she liked them—and that was all there was to it. She had had—in her own words—"some high old pals" in her time, men and women of various virtues and the lack of them, but they all rang true. And this was her only touchstone.

THAT same night she peeped out from behind the scenes and took stock of Ferguson as he sprawled in the front seat and "goggled" at Spangles. He was a husky young man, broad-shouldered and lean, with an air of bigness and out-of-doors about him.

"No dandy about Fergy!" Miss Demonstrator murmured as she gazed through the peephole in the wings. "He wears his duds like he'd as leave be dressed in a bull-hide or a lion-skin."

She turned to Spangles as she danced off, kissing her "jay paws" to the applauding house.

"Say, Spangles, why don't you like Fergy?" she demanded bluntly.

Spangles did a pirouette in the narrow space.

"Perhaps I do," she returned with a glimpse of a smile.

"You stow it away out of sight if you do," observed the Demonstrator sagely: "Fergy has a notion he's on the ash-heap. There he sets out front lookin' like own half-brother to a los' dog!" She peered out at him again, and Spangles followed suit.

There was a regretful light in the eyes of the little dancer as she drew back.

"What d'you see in that wilted tobacco-stalk, Ed Deggers, anyhow, little Spang?" Miss Demonstrator asked bruskly. "What do you waste your gilt-edged moments on him for?"

A hard, calculating look grew in the dancer's face.

"Maybe I have a good reason," she returned in a tone that matched the look; and then she flitted away on her twinkling feet.

Miss Demonstrator looked after her thoughtfully.

"I may be a —— old meddler," she reflected, "but I'm goin' to make it my business to look into both those human documents—with a preference at the start for Fergy."

So as a beginning she planted herself in a comfortable place and surveyed the two of them—Ferguson in his front seat which he found all too small for his big frame, and Ed Deggers in his usual vantage point in the left-hand stage-box, faultlessly attired and languidly oblivious to all but Spangles.

After a short survey of the latter Miss Demonstrator drew back and shrugged her shoulders, murmuring to herself.

"The title page of that pertic'ler human document will be about enough. Eddie doesn't look like very pleasant readin' to me. Next!"

The star pushed past her on her way stageward.

"What did you say?" she asked over her shoulder.

"Nothin' of consequence," Miss Demonstrator returned genially. "I was just talkin' in my sleep."

During the rest of the performance she kept an observant eye upon the big fellow in the front seat. He sprawled restlessly. Occasionally, reaching into his coat pocket and taking out a stocky briar pipe that had seen good service, he fingered it longingly and put it back with a sigh that made Miss Demonstrator grin. Ferguson was "not much on looks," she decided, with his lean, square jaws, jutting forehead, and the dark hair cropped too close for appearance—to the feminine view.

But as the curtain went down on the last scene she left her peep-hole with a nod of satisfaction, saying to herself:

"Fergy is like a stray bull pup at the dog show—he wouldn't take the prize on looks; but he's all dog—which is more than you could say of some of the blue-ribbon Dotty Dimples!" She determined to make his acquaintance as soon as possible.

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Chance favored her, for that night as she left the theater she nearly bumped into a tall figure that lingered in the shadow of the stage-entrance. At the same moment she caught sight of Spangles a few steps ahead, with Deggers hovering alongside of her.

The voice of the little dancer came to her reprovingly.

"Ed! Didn't I tell you not to wait for me? 'Pussy' will catch me if you're not more careful!"

Now Pussy was the name the girls gave to the director as a reward for his watchfulness over their actions.

A puff of cigarette smoke wafted toward Miss Demonstrator. The smoker made an inaudible answer, put his arm through that of Spangles, and sauntered slowly down the street.

The man behind Miss Demonstrator said savagely, beneath his breath—

"I'm a —— fool!"

Miss Demonstrator had an impulse.

"So you are, no doubt—like the rest of us," she said with a little laugh. "But why?"

The man strode out of the shadow.

It was Ferguson, in a towering rage.

"Why?" he echoed wrathfully. "Why? I'd like to know that myself!"

The show-people were pouring out of the stage-entrance. Miss Demonstrator, mindful of the curious looks they cast on the enraged man, touched him gently on the sleeve.

"Come on out of this bunch of goo-goos," she suggested, and won by the genuine friendliness of her tone, Ferguson went on down the street with the little demonstrator. She tried to draw him out to talk about himself, but Ferguson was as communicative as a fried oyster—no more, no less. Miss Demonstrator twinkled as she trudged along beside him, and remembering the briar pipe that lurked in his pocket she invited him to light up—which he did.

After this agreeable process was under way, Ferguson became more sociable and began to converse; he even seemed grateful for Miss Demonstrator's company and admitted that he was a bit lonesome, having no friends in the city.

As they turned the corner into the avenue Little Spangles and her faded cavalier came out of a florist's shop. The girl had an immense bouquet of violets with a white orchid in the center. She was laughing and chattering like a little sparrow.

At the next corner they parted, evidently with some strenuous objections on the part of Deggers. But the girl had her way, with a stamp of her foot to enforce it. Then, having watched Deggers well down the street, Spangles turned and came back toward them at a brisk pace.

She passed them almost on the run—too preoccupied to notice them.

Ferguson looked after her wistfully. He took a step to follow her.

Again Miss Demonstrator had "a hunch."

"Go home!" she commanded with a glint of a smile. "You're in the way!" And Ferguson went.

Miss Demonstrator followed close on the footsteps of Little Spangles. But the girl had gone so swiftly that when Miss Demonstrator caught up she was just coming out of the florist's, tucking something into her purse as she came.

She gave a start of surprise to see the Demonstrator at her elbow.

"You imp of wickedness!" said Miss Demonstrator genially. "What mischief are you up to now?"

Spangles looked a trifle embarrassed. Then in a moment she was her saucy self again. She giggled—one might even say she gurgled—did a fancy step or two on the pavement, and then tucked her hand into Miss Demonstrator's arm.

"Come along, and I'll tell you. The show people think I'm the limit for the cold-blooded—but I don't want you to." She squeezed Miss Demonstrator's arm as she spoke.

THEY walked along in silence a moment. Spangles was evidently thinking where to begin.

"A long time ago, when I was a kid——" she said deliberately.

Miss Demonstrator indulged in a surreptitious grin at the phrase.

"— I knew a young lady who had a most unfortunate love affair," Spangles went on. "I was awfully fond of her, and felt sort of set up because she talked to me about it. Of course I know now that it was because she was lonely and had no friends. She was boarding with my folks, and I used to go up to her room and help her dress when she was going out with this fellow; and she would tell me—well, lots of things she

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oughtn't to have, for I was only a kid in short dresses." Spangles paused.

Miss Demonstrator nodded understandingly.

"Well," the girl went on with a sigh, "everything went wrong with Ada. She used to sit in her room and cry and cry. And sometimes in the night I'd hear her sobbing, and I'd get up and creep into her bed and try to comfort her. I'd go to sleep and wake up a dozen times, and she'd be shaking with crying and trying to muffle it in the bedclothes. But one day my mother found out and—oh, it wasn't her fault. She *had* to send Ada away! My mother was sorry, too, and she went to see her and did all she could to help her."

Spangles walked along soberly a little way. When she spoke again there were tears in her voice.

"Ada died there in the hospital. And that mean skunk of a man," she went on passionately, "didn't even come to see Ada when she wrote and begged him—he let her die without a word or a flower or a message!"

"Sweet creature!" Miss Demonstrator murmured sarcastically.

"It was only a little while after that my father died and my mother got into such poor health that she had to give up the boarding-house. I had studied dancing, so I got an engagement, and I've been doing it ever since and I loathe it, too!"

"You little brick!" exclaimed Miss Demonstrator cordially. "I didn't know you had any one to keep but your small self."

"You bet I have!" Spangles asserted. "My mother gets about the apartment in a wheel-chair, but she can't do much; and there are three kids younger than me, all going to school."

"Um-hm!" Miss Demonstrator remarked thoughtfully, beginning to revise little Spangles in her mind.

"The doctors say that my mother will never be well unless she can get into the country—some place in the South, where she can be outdoors all the time." Spangles sighed prodigiously. "When the doctor told me that I nearly dropped dead, for I only make enough to keep things going at home."

"Hard luck!" sympathized the Demonstrator.

Spangles' head went up.

"Oh, I'll make it! Just give me a little time!"

"Good! That's the way to talk!" commended the little beauty-vender. She loved pluck.

"Oh, I've been blue enough sometimes," Spangles said soberly. Then with a glimmer of a smile—

"But whenever things were slow, something extra came along that I could do—or somebody," she added mirthfully.

"Like Eddie," Miss Demonstrator suggested.

Spangles nodded.

"Like Eddie," she echoed with a hard little laugh. "You think I treat him mean? Nobody could treat Ed Deggers mean enough! He's the man who pushed poor Ada into the dark with his lying promises, and left her."

"Um-hm," Miss Demonstrator mused softly. "Then the title page was right."

"I knew him the minute he came into the theater one evening after the performance had begun," Spangles said. "And then and there I determined to do two things at once—pay him up for what he did to Ada, as far as any one could pay back that sort of thing, and hold him up for all I could squeeze out of him. Do you think that was very bad to do?" the girl asked wistfully.

Miss Demonstrator thought a moment.

"Well, right or wrong, little Spang, Eddie was fair game for any sort of bunco; and I'm not sayin' he don't deserve the limit. Go on!"

"I just laid myself out that night to mash him flat. And you bet I won out!" Spangles turned to Miss Demonstrator, her face all aglow, a flash of triumph in her gray eyes. "That was in Cincinnati, and he has trotted after the show ever since."

Miss Demonstrator looked full into the girl's eyes, an unspoken question in her own.

Spangles blushed hotly.

"No, indeed!" she declared emphatically, shaking her head. "Eddie doesn't get anything out of Little Spangles—but he always thinks he's going to. That's how I hold him," she added with a laugh.

"You're a hard-headed young one," commented Miss Demonstrator admiringly.

"He thinks I'm the most money-mad girl he ever saw," Spangles went on. "If he offers to stake me to a square meal, or take me joy-riding, I tell him I'd rather have the cash. So he ladles it out, growling like

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a teddy-bear!" Spangles laughed at some funny remembrance.

"And tonight?" Miss Demonstrator began, looking significantly at the place on the girl's coat where the flowers had rested.

The little dancer smiled contentedly.

"That's one of the ways of shaking the dollars out of Eddie. I have a special arrangement with that florist to take back the flowers he buys me, and get two-thirds of the price." She turned to the Demonstrator, her elfish little face alight with mischief. "Isn't it wicked?"

Miss Demonstrator joined her in a laugh. Certainly this was a side of Spangles she had not suspected.

"Some fine day, when I have enough money to move my family South," the girl went on, reflectively, "I'll put Eddie wise to what I know of him and give him the G. B."

"And Ferguson?"

"Oh, Fergy——" Spangles sighed. "He believes the very worst of me—now."

"Fergy is the finest fellow I've seen for many a long day!" Miss Demonstrator averred with conviction. "That is, I think so from the little I know about him."

"So—so do I," Spangles murmured rather shyly. "But he's poor—notice his clothes. I couldn't have him spending money on me; that's why I let him believe what he likes about me. Oh, it wasn't easy," she broke off passionately, "to see him getting sour on me!"

"Poor Fergy!" Miss Demonstrator said softly. And keenly watching, she saw Spangles' gray eyes fill with tears that made them crystal-bright in the brilliant lights of the avenue.

The girl brushed them away with her rough little hand.

"Happy Fergy!" she paraphrased. "He's had a lucky escape. Any one who hitches up with me has got to take mother and the three kids."

She turned off the avenue into a dark narrow street.

"Come on home with me," she said coaxingly, "and see my folks."

As it happened, that was just what Miss Demonstrator wanted to do. So she followed the little figure into a dingy doorway and up three flights of stairs wrapped in the gloom that represents a saving in gas-bills, till they reached a landing at the top of the house.

Spangles threw open the door quickly. "I've brought Miss Demonstrator home with me!" she announced joyously, and ushered the beauty-vender into the very neatest, the very homiest room she had ever beheld, with its dainty white Swiss curtains, and the window sills crowded with geraniums in full bloom—red and pink and white.

The droopy figure in the wheel-chair put down the stocking she was darning and reached out a thin hand. The visitor noticed that the invalid had gray eyes like Spangles', and a very winning smile.

"Sallie told me she'd bring you in some time. I'm glad you came." The tone was languid but sincere.

Miss Demonstrator took her hand into a warm clasp. She had to think a moment before she recognized the frivolous Spangles under the homely name of Sallie—it went in with all the other adjustments of the evening.

"I'm honored to be asked," she replied. "Little Spangles isn't what you might call a mixer with the bunch," she added with a laugh.

Spangles came and stood by the wheel-chair, her hand affectionately on her mother's shoulder.

"I don't want to be stiff with them," she declared a trifle apologetically, "but I keep home and stage apart—I don't wish the kids to get a taste for the life. I have to dance for a living, but mother and I are bringing the kiddies up for something different. Aren't we?" She kissed the thin cheek fervently.

Spangles had shed hat and coat and put on an all-enveloping gingham apron.

"Come into the other room and see the youngsters!" she said. "They're fast asleep."

Together they passed from the living-room and bent over the sleepers. Two little girls lay together—all chubby arms and legs, entangled in a seemingly inextricable knot. They had round rosy cheeks and taffy-colored pigtails. The boy of five had a crib to himself—and a sturdy little beggar he was. Spangles tucked the covers around him with a special tenderness.

"Now," she whispered, "do you see why I must get money any decent way I can—why I have to be mean and stingy—and horrid?"

Miss Demonstrator pressed her hand without a word. She began to see what

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was the "wing and buck" that made it rough and red.

After this she went often to the little home, and in her whole-hearted way pitched in—as she expressed it—and helped with the "buck and wing." During the last week in town Spangles did extra work at home to keep things going till she returned, and Miss Demonstrator often wondered how the girl could stand the strain she put upon her slender body.

THE last few days, Deggers, who had up to this time been docile to the point of idiocy, got into a surly mood with Spangles. She had all she could do to hold him down with a continuance of the vague promises that meant nothing. He sulked around the theater and made himself as disagreeable as he dared.

Spangles laughed at him and held out her hard little hand for the cash that ordinarily poured from him without coaxing. But he seemed suddenly to have reached the end of his patience and gave grudgingly and with bitter reproaches.

Miss Demonstrator came upon them one evening quarreling outside the stage-door.

Deggers had grasped Spangles by one slender wrist, and was looking down on her with hot, sullen eyes.

"You've kept me on the string long enough," he grumbled. "I've been a blamed fool to let you! No girl ever treated me like this before. I've shelled out good money for nothing; you've got to——"

Spangles interrupted him impatiently.

"Haven't I told you time and time again that in this company we have to walk a straight line during the season? Afterward it's nobody's business what we girls do; but you sha'n't queer me with Pussy while——"

"That's what you've been doping out to me ever since I saw you first!" he muttered in a rage. "I'm tired of it! You've got to give me something more than promises I tell you, I'm tired of it!"

Spangles turned on him with a stamp of her foot.

"You're tired of it!" she echoed scornfully, throwing all her plans to the wind in one overwhelming moment of disgust. "Well, so am I. Tired of your ugly face, tired of pretending, tired of the low-down game I'm playing with you!"

Ed Deggers's fishy eyes glowed in unwonted alarm. He sensed a coming break with her.

"Now, Spangles," he said in a mollified tone, "don't turn me down. I never liked a girl as much as I like you; and if you'll only be nice to me, I give you my word—" he came close to her, his pasty cheeks dull red with rising emotion— "I give you my word——"

"Your word!" The little dancer threw back her head with a contemptuous laugh. "Your word! The same word, I suppose, that you gave to poor broken-hearted Ada Allen, when you took all she had to give—and turned her down!"

The man started back in surprise.

"W-what do you mean?" he stuttered. Then recovering himself—

"You don't know anything about that!" he asserted with brazen assurance.

Spangles faced him, her eyes blazing.

"Oh yes, I know *all* about it. Ada was my friend. Don't talk to me about your word!"

Deggers went white.

"It's a—a—lie," he stammered.

Spangles shrugged her slim shoulders disdainfully and walked away.

He followed her a few steps, pleading with her. Then, finding his efforts in vain, he stopped short and gazed after the little dancer, his face distorted with rage. As he turned to leave the spot he ran into the demonstrator, who had stood all this time in the deep shadow. He was muttering to himself like a villain in melodrama—

"I'll fix her —— her!"

The little beauty-vender looked uneasy.

"If it wasn't that he's a weak-kneed purp," she mused aloud, "I'd be a bit afraid of what he might do, but ——"

She went slowly home, determined to put Spangles on her guard. But Spangles received her warning with mocking laughter.

"Eddie will talk a lot," she affirmed, "but when it comes to doing—he hasn't the nerve to take revenge on anybody."

THE next night, after the performance was ended, Spangles called to Miss Demonstrator as she ran off the stage—

"Wait for me; I want to tell you something!"

The beauty-vender followed her to the dressing-room and watched her get out of

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her airy frock and into street-clothes. Finally the velvet coat and the droopy little hat were donned, and the two went down the hall with its tiny wired lights and dingy walls. Almost at the door, Spangles turned with an impatient exclamation.

"I've forgotten my key! Walk on, Miss Dem, and I'll catch up."

She flew up the hall again. Miss Demonstrator opened her purse and took out a tip for the doorkeeper. But he was not at his post. Billy was bibulously inclined on occasion; Miss Demonstrator fancied this was one of the occasions. So she put the money back and went out into the street.

Deggers's big purple car stood at the curb. She eyed it indifferently as she passed. Master and man were not in evidence. A "bunch" of the show-people came out laughing and joking, and separated in all directions. Just ahead of her a night-hawk swung himself off his cab and disappeared into a saloon whose back entrance abutted on the little street.

Miss Demonstrator went on to the corner. Still no signs of Spangles. Evidently the girl was having some trouble to find the key. Miss Demonstrator decided to go back and help her.

Before she could turn a faint muffled sound came from the direction of the theater. It was like the cry of a child—or a cat. A moment later Deggers's car whizzed by—noiseless and swift. And from the depths of that car came the cry again—muffled almost to silence!

Miss Demonstrator stood stock still. There was something in that cry that caught at her heart. Her quick feminine intuitions were piecing things together. Deggers's car waiting at the curb; Spangles's delay; the faint call! Was it possible that——

She looked wildly about her. There stood the cab abreast of her. In an instant she climbed to the driver's box, gathered the lines into her hands, and with a lash of the whip started on a forlorn chase after the purple car.

Far ahead she could see the red light of its rear lamp. It seemed absurd to try and keep up the pace; nevertheless she whipped up the horse to its utmost speed. The cab swayed drunkenly over the rough pavement.

For some reason Deggers was keeping to the dark of the small street instead of going out on the avenue. And his chauffeur bowled along leisurely, even deliberately. If Miss Demonstrator's hardly defined suspicions were correct, he could not afford to risk an accident that would mean exposure.

Far ahead they flashed across a well-lighted street. The little red lamp twinkled into the dark again. The cab plunged after it at top speed.

On the corner, as the horse galloped by, a man stood and gazed after the vanishing car. His hands were thrust deep into his pockets. He was smoking a short pipe. It was Ferguson.

Checking the pace an instant, Miss Demonstrator leaned from her perch.

"Ferguson!" she called urgently. "Ferguson!"

He knew her voice. Evidently he imagined she was figuring in a runaway for he ran out into the street and tried to snatch at the horse's head. But Miss Demonstrator brought the whip down on the beast's flank. It leaped forward out of his reach. At the same moment she shouted—

"Jump on!"

Before the front wheels passed him, he got a swift foothold on the step and swung himself to the box beside her.

"What's up?" he bawled in her ear.

She answered him nothing for a moment. Her eye was on the limousine ahead. A trolley car trailed its lights across at the juncture of two streets. The purple car made a spurt of speed, found it risky, put on the brakes and waited. By the time the trolley had passed, the cab had gained half a block on its quarry.

"What's the matter?" Ferguson asked again.

She answered him in jerks, lashing the horse to keep the advantage gained.

"I heard—somebody—cry out—from the car." She did not need to name the car to the man beside her. Well he knew that purple car and its owner. "I was waiting—for—Spangles."

Miss Demonstrator felt Ferguson become tense beside her, but he said nothing.

"I may be wrong," she went on. "It's a just a—a hunch."

Ferguson reached over and took the lines from her.

"Right or wrong," he announced grimly, "we'll chance it."

At the new touch on the reins the animal

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seemed to wake up. It galloped on. Its iron hoofs struck fire from the rough stones.

At that moment Fate again took a hand in the situation. The swift and noiseless machine ahead appeared to develop motor-trouble, for with a spasmodic cough of the engine it slowed down to a crawl. It stopped dead, sputtered, began to crawl again. The little red light disappeared around a corner.

It seemed an age before the cab reached the corner, swung wildly around it, and saw once more the dark bulk of the car.

It had increased its distance. Evidently the chauffeur had regained control, though at a much reduced speed. They had turned into a residential street. In the quiet the horse's galloping feet rang on the cement pavement with a sound that carried far.

For the first time it seemed to occur to the occupants of the purple car that they were being pursued. To test the matter they began to turn up one street and down another, watching to see if the cab followed. When they were assured of this they managed to put on more speed.

The exhausted horse fell behind. The gleaming red light began to recede into the murk of the distance.

It was a lost chase.

MISS DEMONSTRATOR turned to Ferguson, her face full of a bitter disappointment. It had been an absurd idea—that a one-horse cab could keep a high-power machine in sight. Still, they had had a chance—and now it was lost. And with the losing of that chance Miss Demonstrator's "hunch" returned with full force. She would have been willing to stake all she possessed that Spangles was in that car.

Something of all this must have flashed from her mind to Ferguson—a sort of delicate wireless telegraphy. A savage light came into his face. He handed the lines over to Miss Demonstrator, and reached into his overcoat pocket.

She had no idea what he was about to do; but she took firm hold of the lines and laid on the whip, determined that the horse should not flag with the change in drivers. At the same instant the motor far in front of them began to miss and sputter. It slowed down. The cab lurched drunkenly after it. It gained. The distance lessened.

Ferguson braced himself, leaned far out, and watched keenly till the halting machine passed under an arc-light. There was a flash from the colt in his hand—a sharp report——

An echo came from the dark ahead—the noise of a bursting tire. A second shot went wild as the machine slid into the shadow again.

The next light showed the big car limping along on its flat rear tire.

"If they turn a corner," Ferguson shouted in Miss Demonstrator's ear, "I can get a front tire. But I'm afraid to risk it from directly behind; I might not clear the body of the car."

Miss Demonstrator nodded understandingly. She was saving her breath for emergencies.

At the next corner, the car slid into the rays of another arc-light. It swerved ever so slightly in a long shallow curve.

The gun in Ferguson's hand spoke twice. For an instant it seemed to the two, clinging to the swaying cab, that both shots had missed. Then, just as the limousine swung around the corner, the near front tire exploded with a bark. The shot had damaged it; a few revolutions of the wheels had finished the work.

The sudden tilt of the car on the inner side of the turn made it lurch ominously. For a moment it looked like an upset. But it righted itself. They were off again, and the car on its uneven wheels rolled and dipped like a ship in a stormy sea.

The cab gained.

The limousine swung around another corner. The chauffeur leaned out and looked back. They could hear him speak to his master in the interior of the car. Some obstacle in the road must have escaped his eye, for the car humped itself over something on the full-tired side and fell bodily against an electric light pole.

There was a crash of breaking glass. The chauffeur sprang out on the pavement, talking excitedly and gesticulating. The door swung open. Deggers stepped out—or rather crawled, for the body of the car leaned crazily against the pole and blocked his way. He was muffled in furs; but the two behind knew his manner of movement, and the inevitable halo of cigarette smoke around his head. He began to curse with an abandon that, with the accident, at once

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drew a crowd, even in that quiet neighborhood.

At the same moment the cab horse staggered and sank to its knees with a final rattle of iron on the pavement. It was within a cab's length of the limousine. Ferguson sprang to the ground.

"Come on!" he cried over his shoulder, and gave his companion a hand.

They made a détour around the side of the car, avoiding the eyes of Deggers and his man. Deggers was nervously explaining that his wife had had "a little too much" and he was taking her home.

"Somebody get me a taxi!" he ordered. A man on the edge of the crowd, foreseeing a tip, made off up the street.

The far side of the car tilted up at a rakish angle, but Ferguson's height stood him in good stead. He peered in through the window a long moment.

"Is it?" Miss Demonstrator asked anxiously.

"I don't know—can't see," he answered.

Some one in the crowd moved. A ray from the street-light streamed into the car. Ferguson uttered an exclamation. He strode around the back of the car.

Before Deggers was aware of his presence Ferguson seized him by the collar and addressed him with a depth that made the unhappy man shiver.

"You infernal coyote! You would, would you?"

He gave Deggers a shake, growling as a dog growls with a rat in his teeth.

The crowd, amazed at this new development, came closer, peering over each other's shoulders and ventured various conjectures on the situation. A policeman came running.

The taxi arrived. The man who had called it stepped out and looked about him, not discerning Deggers in the lean shadow of wrath that towered over him.

"Where's the gent that wanted the taxi?" he asked dubiously.

"I want it," Ferguson announced. "This gentleman has changed his mind. He's going home—" he paused ever so slightly on the word—"in the patrol-wagon."

The officer pushed his way through the crowd.

"Here's your man, officer!" Ferguson handed the struggling Deggers into his charge. Then he turned his attention to Miss Demonstrator who was beckoning him from the door of the limousine. He brushed aside the intervening people and stood beside her. She whispered in his ear.

"——!" Ferguson ejaculated, and Miss Demonstrator heard him grit his teeth in ungovernable rage.

He reached in and reappeared with a little velvet-clad figure lying limp in his arms. He bore the unconscious girl to the taxi, saw her safe with Miss Demonstrator beside her, then started to leap in himself, but the policeman bawled out—

"Come with me, and make the charge against this man, unless you want me to let him go!"

"All right!" exclaimed Ferguson. He stepped back to the pavement. "To the nearest doctor!" he cried to the chauffeur, and shut the taxi door.

He watched them whirl around the corner, then turned to the officer and said curtly—

"You bet I'll make the charge against him—a low-down one, of needle- drugging and abduction!"

The next night, for the first time the big purple car was missing from the curb by the stage-entrance; and Ferguson, sprawling in the front seat, looked with grim satisfaction on an empty chair in the box that had been occupied by Deggers.

IT WAS the end of the last matinee. The short winter day had slipped into dusk. Miss Demonstrator, hurrying out after all the show-people had gone, found her path barred by Ferguson.

"Hello!" he said in a friendly fashion. "I was afraid I had missed you."

He walked beside her as he spoke.

"I'm going West tonight, and want to say good-by to you."

"Sorry to hear that" Miss Demonstrator returned. "What's the why an' wherefore?"

Ferguson laughed shortly.

"I might put it in two words—Little Spangles."

"You might find things better, now that Eddie is out of the way," she urged tentatively.

"Perhaps I wouldn't wish to find things better," Ferguson said slowly.

"Hm!" Miss Demonstrator commented. "Hot an' cold from the one spigot! I'd have bet my last hairpin that Fergy was dead crushed on Spangles."

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Ferguson flushed darkly and answered:

"I love that little girl as I love my life. That's why I'm going to leave her."

"Button, button, who's got the button?" Miss Demonstrator sing-songed in disgust. "What's the answer, anyhow?"

Ferguson laughed in spite of himself.

"If you *must* have the answer, I'll have to tell you——"

"The story of your life," finished Miss Demonstrator resignedly. "Well, I brung it onto myself. Begin!"

"Not quite so bad as that," the man returned, smiling at her tone. "Only a few facts about me, so that you'll get on to what I'm driving at. I'm a ranchman from Southern California. No folks—lonely—came East for a change—and a wife too, if I saw the right one." He paused.

"And then?" Miss Demonstrator suggested.

Ferguson threw out one big hand in a gesture of protest.

"Wasn't it my luck," he burst out bitterly, "that a home-loving man like myself should lose every atom of him—heart, head and soul—over a little featherweight whose only thought about home is to leave it behind!"

"Oh, no!" ejaculated Miss Demonstrator under her breath. "So that's the way the cat jumps!"

"Did you speak?" he asked, bending toward her.

"Not for publication," Miss Demonstrator answered briefly. "Go on!"

"Well, when I saw that little girl was only for cities and the whirl of things, I tried to like that way of living too; I tried hard to be citified," he confessed with a rueful grimace.

"With Eddie as a bright example," she heaved in.

"It wasn't any use," Ferguson concluded dully. "I'm homesick for the West—for the big outdoors. Of course," he went on after a moment, "it wouldn't be fair to ask a girl like Spangles to leave the city and mope in the backwoods—even if I had a chance to persuade her. So I'm off tonight to my own diggings—which aren't bad—I've one of the biggest and richest ranches in Southern California.

"Gosh!" he broke off suddenly. "Everything is green as an emerald with the winter rains now—posies everywhere—violets, roses, lilies!"

His tone was so homesick that Miss Demonstrator smiled in the darkness.

"Hm!" she mused, going back to the first subject. "Then Eddie didn't come into the matter, so you could notice it."

"You bet he did!" the ranchman said between his teeth. "He's a chump, I know, and not much good anyway you take him. But that's no excuse for a girl to handle him the cold-blooded way——" he broke off. "I don't mean to talk that way about Spangles," he declared penitently. "But—it hurts me. I put her up as high as a white star in the sky, and then——"

Miss Demonstrator laid her hand on his arm and gave it a crisp pat.

"Open your ears wide," she commanded, "and you'll hear something that'll make little Fergy a heap wiser."

Whereupon she told him, in her own picturesque way, Spangles' story of the girl whom Deggers had "pushed out into the dark and left;" of Spangles's determination to punish him and at the same time to get money that she desperately needed. Finally she described dramatically the little dancer's interview with the man—her dislike of the "low-down" game she had played with him, and her contemptuous dismissal of him, which had led to his attempt to abduct her.

When she had finished, Ferguson was silent for several moments. Then he straightened his broad shoulders and said as if musing aloud—

"I might have put half the world between me and Spangles without knowing I had misjudged her." He turned to the demonstrator.

"Thank you!" he said simply, and reached out his hand. "At least I go away feeling better in my mind. It means a lot to me—knowing the little girl was in right on that Deggers affair."

Miss Demonstrator gasped.

"Guess again, Bobbie!" she admonished herself. Then to Ferguson with a certain brusk kindness: "You don't look like a weak-kneed proposition. Stay an' see it out—don't take a girl's 'no.'"

The man from the ranch shook his head.

"I'd never have a chance with the little girl in a thousand years. I'm not her kind. She's for the whirl of the city; I'm for the plains and the hills. She craves excitement, traveling all over the shop, with the

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glare of lights and applause; I love hard riding with a good horse between my knees, and home at the end of the day!"

He stopped with an embarrassed laugh, ashamed to have said so much of his real feelings.

"You'll think I'm a fool," he said, "but I've always been batty about home. Never had one—brought up in an orphanage. Haven't one now, though I've lots of cash to buy one. It means more than four walls and furniture to me. It means a wife—" he laughed again in a shamefaced way—"I'm loony about kids!"

Miss Demonstrator had one of her "hunches." She grabbed the homesick rancher by the arm.

"Come on!" she commanded, and strode along as if bound for a train.

"What's up?" Ferguson asked, completely puzzled.

"Never you mind!" she returned. "Only come along peaceable."

"Anything wrong with your thinker?" he inquired amiably.

"No," she answered. "There's nothin' wrong with my mind, Fergy. I've just made it up—it's a habit I have."

Seeing that she had something up her sleeve he humored her, and followed her with an indulgent grin.

She began to hum a tune that seemed strangely familiar to him. In a moment he recognized it as "Home, Sweet Home," sung considerably off the key.

They turned off the avenue and went rapidly down a smaller street; and just as Ferguson was wondering how a woman with such short legs could get so much speed out of them, Miss Demonstrator dived into a doorway and began to climb a steep stair.

"Now where the deuce——" Ferguson said perplexedly.

She looked back over her shoulder reassuringly.

"If you're fond of 'Home, Sweet Home,' and not afraid of stairs, I'm goin' to show you the homiest home I know of—just for a sort of a pattern!"

They reached the top landing.

Miss Demonstrator paused, waiting for the young man to catch up. Then with a joyful flourish she knocked.

"Come in!" came a voice from within.

Miss Demonstrator flung the door open.

THE ranchman stood blinking in the light. Then his eyes took in a pleasing tableau. Under the lamp the mother sat in her wheel-chair, paring potatoes. A chubby girl of ten was setting the table, her taffy-colored pigtails bobbing about as she moved. Another little girl sat curled up on the sofa studying her lesson. A sturdy boy of five bestrode a chair and rode at a dashing pace. Beyond him the geraniums on the sill bloomed scarlet and pink against the filmy white curtains. Some one in the back room hummed a busy cheerful tune, and one could hear the *rub-rub* of a washboard.

The big Westerner looked about him with quiet delight. He held his hat pressed against his breast, like a man at a shrine.

Miss Demonstrator drew him toward the wheel-chair.

"Mrs. MacPherson, this is Ferguson." Then, hardly waiting for the greeting between them, she asked breathlessly—

"Where's Sallie?"

"In the kitchen, washing," the invalid responded.

"Come!" Miss Demonstrator commanded, and pushed Ferguson before her through the narrow passage into the kitchen. Even then he was racking his brain to remember of whom the invalid reminded him—her gray eyes with——

A little figure in a gingham apron bent over the washtub. She had gained a few inches of height by standing on a soap box, and she was making the suds fly in great shape, and singing in her clear little voice.

She turned.

"Oh, Miss Dem!" she began; then saw the man with her, and stopped in confusion.

Ferguson blinked with surprise.

"Spangles!" he exclaimed, and took a step toward her. He was so "flabbergasted," as Miss Demonstrator put it, that he stood and stared and stared. Then suddenly something dawned on him as she stood there before him, her little bare arms glistening with soapsuds, her short yellow hair in tiny damp curls about her rosy face. Something in her attitude, in the droop of her head, told him he had more of a chance with Spangles than he had ever dreamed. He strode forward to her and took her slim shoulders in the grip of his big hands.

"Spangles—little girl——"

His voice was gentle and so full of love

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that Miss Demonstrator's eyes filled up in a most unwonted fashion.

"I've come to ask you to marry me; don't turn me down again! I've the finest ranch in all California—I'll bet you'd like it. And if you didn't, why, we could come back to the city. Say yes!" he pleaded.

Spangles looked up at him wonderingly. She was trying to adjust herself to the new facts. Fergy well-to-do—a ranchman in the very summer-land she was saving up to go to——

Ferguson misunderstood her silence.

"If it's the kids and the mother that stand in the way, little one," he went on, his lean tanned face alight with eagerness, "remember I'm proposing to the whole outfit!" he laughed in a sort of embarrassed way, "I'm daffy about home-folks."

Still she was silent, searching his face with serious gray eyes.

"I know you don't love me yet," the big fellow said humbly, "but——"

"Don't love you!" Spangles echoed, finding her voice all of a sudden. "Why Fergy, I've never loved any one else—if you really want to know!"

Ferguson's head whirled.

"Then why——" he stammered.

"Why did I turn you down?" she finished. "Because—because——" she dropped her head. "Because I loved you too much to do anything else."

Before Ferguson could reply, Miss Demonstrator laughed softly, as if something both pleased and amused her.

"Well, here's a pair of you!" she exclaimed whimsically. "Fergy was for sayin' farewell, because he loved Spangles. And Spangles turned Fergy down because she was too fond of him to say yes!"

The lovers laughed a trifle embarrassedly. Spangles said:

"It does look funny, I guess. But if you had ever been in love, Miss Dem, you'd understand."

A strange expression flitted over Miss Demonstrator's smiling face, and was gone.

"Perhaps I understand better than I let on," she answered with unusual gentleness.

Spangles sprang to her side and, throwing her arms around the little vender, gave her an ardent hug. Ferguson took Miss Demonstrator's hand into a warm clasp, as if, with Spangles, he would thus draw her into the charmed circle of their happiness. Miss Demonstrator humorous, or masterful, or satirical, they knew well; but Miss Demonstrator sad or wistful——

She herself broke the tension with a jolly laugh.

"Come, get acquainted!" she suggested, and together she and Spangles took Ferguson to the next room and introduced him properly all around the family.

Later they sat down to a "homy" supper, and talked the matter over before it was time for the evening performance. It was settled that as soon as Spangles' season was ended there would be a modest wedding "with no frills"—to be followed by a general exodus from the stuffy city apartment to Ferguson's ranch. Later still the children went to bed, talking excitedly of ponies and rabbits and flower gardens; while the frail invalid leaned back in her chair and dreamed of blue skies and warm soft air that would make her—so Ferguson declared—"as good as new!"

As the ranchman sprawled in his customary seat that night an expression of extraordinary satisfaction spread over his countenance when Spangles danced on, her yellow-tressed head held abstractedly to one side, as if her mind were not altogether on her steps. And he smiled still more as he caught the gleam of the diamond that he had placed on her rough little hand not an hour before.

And late that same night, after Ferguson had seen a very soft-eyed Spangles safely into the little hall, he stood in the street and watched till the light sprang up in a window on the top floor.

"My heavens!" he whispered in a sudden panic. "How near I came to missing it—love and home and my little——" He paused, then substituted another name. "My little Soapsuds! If it hadn't been for——"

And in a distant street, up two flights of stairs, in the room she called home, Miss Demonstrator, feeding an atrociously ugly bulldog who whimpered when she called him Angel-face, suddenly smiled for no reason at all, as if somebody had whispered something pleasant in her ear.

The next *Miss Dem.* story will appear in the April issue!

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NIGHT'S NIGHT and the TOAD

by

RUDOLPH R. KREBS

THEY buried Hughie Macgregor at three of the afternoon, that sweltering day in August, with all the pomp and reverent majesty accorded a martyred president. They buried Hughie Macgregor—the whitest, cleanest policeman on the force—and as the somber cortege passed through the streets with the band wailing its minor lament, callous-hearted business men bared their heads to the pelting sun to pay a last tribute to the man who in the performance of his duty had met death unafraid. And when the dust raised by the last carriage in the mile-long procession had settled to the ground, they resumed their way with set faces and an involuntary clenching of the hands.

"The Toad" was still at large. Current opinion prevailed that after the killing of Hughie Macgregor he had headed southward, planning to lose himself among the thousands of blacks in Vicksburg or New Orleans. As a direct consequence, the jails in the towns along the river were jammed with sweating, frightened negroes, who, it invariably developed, tallied with the description of the Toad only in so far as black is not white.

Each succeeding disappointment heaped fresh fuel on the fire of irrational race-hatred that already was burning dangerously. In that frenzied period men lost their sense of discrimination and descended to vicious generalizing.

St. Louis had fast been approaching a state bordering on hysteria. The long-continued drought, the succession of day upon suffocating day, when the sun rode like a molten ball in the blinding copper sky, and men and beasts dropped like flies in the city streets, when day was a nightmare and night a waking horror, had worn through the cuticle of apathy and exposed the raw, bleeding nerves. Men snapped at each other like wolves. The slightest careless utterance provoked the swift exchange of blows.

Such was the condition of affairs when Hughie Macgregor was found breathing out his life in the "Gully," a section of "Smoky Row," a district that was shunned by the hard-working, law-abiding negroes. His clothing was torn to shreds, his face horribly mutilated and slashed with razor-cuts; he had eighteen knife-wounds on his body, and was only able to gasp, "The Toad. . . got me. . from behind," when he expired.

The wanton brutality of the crime rocked the city—white and black—to its foundations. A cordon of police was drawn about "Smoky Row;" placards, bearing the Toad's picture, and offering a large reward for him, dead or alive, were spread broadcast; every clue was followed with grim determination; all to no avail.

The Toad had disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened up and swallowed him. There arose a suspicion, that speedily developed into a firm conviction, that the Toad had not fled the city but was still skulking in some recess of "Smoky Row." The police forgot the torrid heat in their fevered hunt for the fugitive, but although they raked the district as with a fine-toothed comb, their efforts proved unproductive of results.

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From the waiting citizens came sullen mutterings. The police were bunglers, they growled. They gathered in knots of three and four and held low-voiced, furtive converse late in the afternoon of Hughie's funeral, until at six o'clock more than five thousand men had sworn that before the dawn of the next day they would find the Toad and deliver him up to swift justice or "Smoky Row" would be a heap of charred ruins. "Two o'clock at Hager's Corners," was the word that was passed from lip to lip.

IT WAS eight of the evening and tawny dusk, as Billy Endicott, of the *Courier-Journal*, lifted himself wearily up the step of the Belleville car at the west approach of the Washington Avenue bridge. His somber suit, innocent of dust, was in keeping with the tragic mask he wore. The funeral of his friend had painted dark circles under his weary eyes, had lent a downward curve to his normally smiling lips, had set a throbbing, aching lump in his throat.

He had covered the funeral for his paper, and had written of his friend as only a man can write whose heart is filled to bursting with poignant memories of one upon whose insensate form the earth has been freshly tamped.

There was but a sprinkling of passengers that night, and after a cursory glance at them, Billy retired behind his newspaper.

The face of the Toad leered up at him from the printed page. A bestial face it was. A low simian forehead, sloping back from two small, narrow-set eyes, rat-like in their cunning; a degenerate mouth, rolled in an insolent grin; high cheek-bones and a nose that sprawled; such was the slayer of the generous Hughie. A rough shirt, open at the throat, revealed a bull-neck, thick as a ship's hawser and seemingly of the same texture. On the left side, down near the shoulder, ran a broad, sinister scar. Billy knew him by reputation only. He was a Jamaican half-breed, ruthless, daring, cunning, slippery as an eel. And because the creature was cheating justice, Billy reflected, a city would run amuck that night.

To rid himself of the weight of depression that he felt was stealing over him, he got up and walked to the front of the car. With nose flattened against the glass, he watched the ever-changing tunnel of light bored into the blackness ahead by the powerful head-light.

He stepped back a pace as the car rounded a curve, and suddenly the cone of light dissolved from sight, and in the mirror afforded by the glass he saw a face behind him that looked vaguely familiar—a face black as ebony, resting on a shiny white collar, and crowned with a mass of kinky, grayish wool, like the stuffing out of an old mattress.

A luxuriant tuft of hair had found its way down the sides of the cheeks and protruded timidly to lend an air of gentle old age to the face. On the flattened nose there rested a pair of heavily rimmed spectacles. A bow tie of generous proportions strove to conceal a dirty shirt-bosom.

From the pocket of the coat there peeped forth a bordered handkerchief. The negro looked acutely uncomfortable, as if he were not accustomed to wearing full regalia.

"Some nigger preacher whom I've seen at a revival, I reckon," was Billy's unspoken comment.

He turned to resume his seat and, as he turned, the preacher sharply inclined his head and with cupped hand to his face, as if shielding his eyes from the light within, gazed earnestly out of the open window. The action provoked Billy's interest, and when he passed the negro's seat he stared at him with open curiosity.

Arrived at his seat he tried to continue the reading of his newspaper, but between him and the lines of type there obtruded a black face, framed in dirty, gray wool. There was something about the old negro that awakened in Billy a feeling of mistrust. What it was, he could not determine. He puzzled vainly until the car arrived at Edgmont where he had to transfer to the Lebanon car that waited on its siding.

He descended stiffly, but had scarcely proceeded ten steps, when a sudden impulse to turn about possessed him, and wheeling he was in time to catch a glimpse of the negro preacher making his way through the shadows up the road toward Belleville. In his hand he carried a small bag, and, before the marble-cutter's shop on the corner hid him from sight, Billy saw him cast a furtive glance over his shoulder.

"Now where in Sam Hill is that nigger headed for?" asked Billy of himself. "There's no colored church up that way

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that I know of," he continued, assuming the reporter's prerogative of making other peoples' business his own, "and that nigger sure does look like a preacher. Either there's something fishy about this business, or I'll have to consult a liver specialist. And I'm *not* morbidly inclined. Oh, well——"

He shrugged his shoulders impatiently and ran for his car with the muttered observation that "Uncle Tom could be headed for ——!" for all he cared. He would run down his assignment and hurry back to the city in time for the threatened descent upon "Smoky Row," which he felt was inevitable, since the authorities, even if they were so inclined, would be powerless to prevent it. But when he tried to dismiss the negro preacher from his mind, he found he could not. The queer figure popped up before him whichever way he turned. Half angry at himself for having meddled, he set his jaded brain to work to see if he could define the cause for his uneasiness.

BILLY was strong on hunches. He would back a hunch to the blue-sky limit when reason would not have secured from him a second thought. Just now he had a well-defined hunch that two and two, in the case of the negro preacher, totaled five instead of the usual four. The significance of some detail that his keen eye had observed, but that his fagged brain had failed to register, hovered in the fringe of his consciousness and persistently eluded him.

The mental stress under which he labored caused the perspiration to stand out in great welling drops on his forehead.

"Hair like a mattress, thick-rimmed spectacles, a high celluloid collar, and a greenish-black coat," his brain clicked off again and again. "And there was something else. Something incongruous, something—By Jove! I have it! *Cheeks comparatively smooth!*

"In order to harmonize with the kinky gray wool, his cheeks should have had the conformity of a withered apple. And then, too, there was a black edging on the *inner* side of his collar! Outside rather clean, as if it had been put on but an hour before; inside black as pitch. Of course, it rubbed off of his neck! The man is a negro. His features show that. But he is not an old negro, nor a black one. Billy, you're an ass—an unmitigated ass! Eliminate the wig and false whiskers, remove the glasses, change the black to yellow—the Toad!"

Billy, in his excitement, almost shouted aloud. Without stopping to think farther, he cast a swift glance out of the window, and pushed the button above his seat. The car stopped almost immediately.

Billy leaped off. He looked about him. All was darkness, save for the light from the little station-shed.

"I'm about four miles from Edgmont," he observed when he found his bearings. "It would take me three-quarters of an hour to walk back. I'll wait for the next car."

He had acted on the impulse of the moment when he jumped from the car. He had no fixed plan in his mind. His further actions depended upon what he found when he arrived at Edgmont.

Never had the minutes passed so slowly. An intense, expectant hush pervaded the night. On the western horizon a heavy cloud-bank loomed threateningly. The withered trees and shrubs, heavy with dust, drooped dejectedly. From the sun-baked earth arose a scorching wave of heat.

Inaction was maddening; yet there was nothing to do but wait. After ten minutes of waiting, a chilling doubt as to the correctness of his conclusion assailed him. In trembling haste he drew his newspaper from his pocket, and by the dim glow of the electric-lights, gazed searchingly at the picture of the Toad and compared it line for line with his mental image of the pseudo preacher. Both had the sloping forehead, the flat nose, the loose lips. There could be no mistake! The Toad and the suspicious passenger were one and the same!

WHEN the car finally swung around the bend and stopped to take him on, Billy was gratified to find Ferris, an acquaintance, the conductor in charge.

"Say, Ferris," he asked when that worthy had collected his fare, "do you still carry your thousand-shootin' air-gun?"

Ferris glanced at the only other passenger, who was finding partial relief from the heat in the sweet forgetfulness of sleep, and lifted the flap of his linen coat.

"Yes sir!" emphatically. "My wife wouldn't let me make this night trip without it, especially when traffic is heavy."

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He produced a wicked-looking revolver and handed it to Billy.

"Let me have it for tonight," Billy requested as he weighed the weapon in his hand.

"Sure! Go as far as you like," the conductor responded generously. He looked a question at Billy, but forbore to voice it. "By the way," he added somewhat shamefacedly, "it isn't loaded. I'd be scared stiff of the darned thing if it were. Want some cartridges?"

"Well—yes, I reckon you might give me some if you have them handy. Thanks!"

The conductor reached into his grip and handed him a box of the deadly capsules.

They were nearing Edgmont when Ferris, who had his head out of the window in a vain endeavor to catch a vagrant, cooling breeze, pulled Billy's sleeve.

"Look at that sky!" he ejaculated in amazement.

The western sky was one mass of tumultuously piling clouds. Down in the black heart of the mass the lightning played incessantly. As they strained their ears above the rattle of the car there came to them the ominous growl of thunder.

"Don't tell me we're going to have rain!" cried Ferris. "That's too good to be true."

"I hope we're not to be disappointed," was Billy's fervent rejoinder. "Another week like the past would make me a fighting lunatic."

They rumbled into Edgmont.

As they descended to the ground it seemed as if they had entered an inferno of heat. It was suffocatingly close. Although the clouds tumbled riotously in the heavens, not a breath stirred down below. Overhead, the stars glowed brightly. The air was electric with an indefinable menace.

"What's wrong with the night?" Ferris croaked hoarsely.

Billy turned to him with quick interest.

"Do you feel it too?" he asked seriously.

"Like the beginning of the end, it seems to me."

"I want to be home when that strikes us," Ferris volunteered. "Take care of yourself, Billy."

He gave Billy an impulsive, unnecessary hand-clasp and clambered aboard his car for the homeward journey.

Billy, wishing with all his heart that he too were on his way home, watched the car until it disappeared from view. Then he stepped to the cement platform and considered his next move.

EDGMONT is simply an L of business fronts, the majority of which are saloons. The base of the L faces toward the north, and is no more than a hundred feet in length. Along this side runs the track leading to O'Fallon and Lebanon. Along the other side that faces west, the street-car tracks lead to St. Louis on the right hand, and Belleville on the left. Directly opposite this side and overlooking it from a distance of a hundred yards, rises a series of tumbled knolls, whose steep sides are covered with dense growth.

From the saloon behind Billy came the drunken jangle of a mechanical piano. Farther down the line it was answered by another.

"I'll play a lone hand," Billy decided, after looking irresolutely at the several dens of debauchery. "No booze-shaken nerves wanted in my party. Well," drawing a deep breath, "here goes!"

He stepped from the walk and made his way to the spot where he had last glimpsed the Toad. It was a simple matter to follow the tracks made in the deep dust by the broad, flat feet of the negro. For ten yards they led undeviatingly parallel with the car-tracks. There they turned off sharply at right angles and plunged through the scrub hedging the ditch. A vivid flash of lightning afforded Billy a momentary glimpse of the trail as it doubled back. Twenty feet farther along, the dust had been trampled in a spot a yard in circumference, where the negro had halted.

"The devil!" ejaculated Billy. "He walked up the road until the tombstone-cutter's shop hid him from the observation of any one—of me—watching from the Lebanon car, and then doubled back, and peered over the hedge until he was assured that I had gone. The clever devil!"

The discovery led him to believe that he had to deal with a criminal shrewder than the average. It therefore behooved him to proceed with caution.

From the trampled spot, the trail struck off to the hills. Aided by the flashes of lightning that were becoming ever more frequent, Billy followed through the sandy soil until he reached the foot-bridge spanning the creek that flows along the base of

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the mounds; now a lifeless trickle, but in spring a raging torrent.

It was evident that the fugitive was making for some retreat in the half-savage tangle of hills. But where? Billy lighted a cigarette and puffed nervously while he considered.

"It's the Toad, and no mistake," he expressed his cogitations aloud. "St. Louis was getting too hot for him—literally and figuratively—and so he decided to clear out. He had his nerve right with him, all right, but I reckon he thought that in the sheer boldness of his departure lay his only hope of escape. He'll lie doggo until the hue and cry has subsided. There isn't a more secluded spot than this, nor one better adapted for hiding. But where?" he asked himself again.

None knew better than Billy the wild waste of country that lay ahead, for the Fall before he and the city editor had spent a long day tramping over the hills searching for a reputed coal outcrop; and he fully appreciated the difficulty of locating a man with a price on his head, who wanted nothing so much as to remain hidden.

"The only thing for me to do is to follow his trail," Billy decided. "But I'll need more illumination than the lightning affords. And I'll have to hurry!" he added with an anxious look at the sky.

He turned on his heel and retraced his steps to one of the general stores where he knew he could procure a pocket flash-lamp, since they were in demand by the miners working the soft-coal beds. Thus supplied, he grimly returned to his quest.

THE sandy soil gave place to hard clay that left little imprint; but with the aid of his flash, Billy managed to find here and there a slight abrasion where the fugitive's boot had scuffed the surface. The hill here ascended steeply. As the lightning flashed, through the interstices in the dense foliage, Billy caught glimpses of a thin path that wormed its way to the summit.

The Toad had taken this path not more than an hour before; where he was now, Billy, of course, had no means of knowing. He might be lurking behind every turn in the zigzag path. He strained his eyes upward, but could see nothing except the silent, waiting shoulder of the knoll, overhung by an ominously heavy canopy of roily clouds.

He looked back at the lights blazing from the Edgmont saloons; and at that moment, with the deadly menace lurking in the shadowy wood at his back, they looked peculiarly inviting and secure. The blatant piano kept up its jangling revelry, accompanied by drunken shouts and ribald laughter. Through it all, however, sounded the note of human companionship.

Man unconsciously leans upon his neighbor. Billy all at once felt excluded, insignificant, alone. He was about to embark on a perilous enterprise. There was no one to slap him on the back to wish him God-speed; there was no one to see whether he acquitted himself nobly or ill.

A light breeze had sprung up, fingering the leaves and setting up a ghostly rustling in the underbrush. The dull booming of heavenly artillery conveyed a subtle threat. The atmosphere was impregnated with vague disquietude.

Inaction was slowly sapping Billy's courage. He shook himself impatiently.

"I'm scared to death," he confessed with a weak attempt at a laugh. "But I'm too dad-blamed scared to run!"

He cast a last, lingering look at the cheerful lights and commenced the ascent, his pocket-lamp cutting yellow circles of light on the ground ahead. He paused frequently to pump air into his nicotine-tortured lungs, for the climb was arduous. Clutching a vine here and a projecting root there, he hoisted himself slowly upward, straining his ears to catch the first sound from the man he was hunting.

His heart skipped a beat, and his hand flew swiftly to his revolver when a dark shadow loomed up before him, but it proved to be nothing but a bush that barred his way. He clenched his teeth to keep them from chattering, and pushed doggedly on

He reached the summit after a heart-breaking scramble that left him weak and panting. He leaned to regain his breath against a withered tree-trunk, blasted by the lightning of numerous storms. He was bathed in perspiration.

The fugitive murderer, too, had halted there. The outline of the hand-bag, where he had set it down while he rested, was clearly defined in the inch-deep dust. From there the tracks ran to the edge of the knoll and broke through the scrub to the north.

In a flash it came to Billy where the negro was heading. He remembered that the hill

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cascaded in a series of wild plunges until in one last mad leap it reached a deep valley, a mile in width, swampy in nature and thickly studded with stunted pines.

In almost the exact center of the swampy area rose a little knob. Looking downward that golden day of the Autumn of the year before, he had noticed a thatched roof gleaming dully between the trees and had speculated idly on the probable occupants of the hut. Now, with nothing to go upon but the direction of the tracks on the edge of the knoll, Billy felt that he need search no farther. The Toad must be in the little hut on the island far below him.

How it was that the negro slayer had heard of the isolated hut, and whether he were there alone or with a gang of like depravity, troubled him not a whit. The Toad was there. It was his duty to get him.

HE HAD scarcely arrived at this determination when there came a particularly vivid flash of lightning, succeeded almost immediately by a detonating crash of thunder. The ground rocked. A few great drops of rain, like silver dollars, spat viciously about him; and looking upward and outward he saw a straight curtain of water racing toward him with the speed of an express-train. Before it the trees bent to the ground as if held by some huge invisible hand. And even above the rattle of the thunder there came a sobbing suspiration.

Unmindful of the lightning that enveloped him, Billy, in a species of fascinated awe, watched the tempest break against the base of the knoll and sweep upward. Simultaneously he found himself lifted off his feet amid a smother of leaves and twigs and uprooted grasses. He fought savagely for air. The wind tossed him about roughly, and then tiring of its sport, dropped him and hurried on. He landed in a tangle of bushes down the side of the knoll. As he struggled to his feet, the full violence of the deluge struck him.

At police-headquarters he had once witnessed the subjugation of a recalcitrant prisoner by means of the water-cure. Now he experienced to the full the suffocating horror of the barbarous punishment.

He rolled over on his face, retching to clear his lungs of water, while he waited for the first violence of the downpour to subside. Subside it did, although when he staggered to his feet, weak and shaking, the rain still pelted him remorselessly. He made for the nearest tree and huddled in its grudging shelter.

After a few moments a strange calm stole over him. He was indifferent alike to his drenched condition, the lightning flare, and thunder peal. The only thing that mattered to him was that he must get the Toad. And somehow he had a presentiment that he would succeed. A mightier hand than his had entered the game and was shaping events. He was content to be the instrument.

When, therefore, he dully renewed the pursuit of the negro fugitive, he started off through the trackless scrub without hesitation. Branches flew back and slapped his face; gnarled roots pushed up through the soggy leaf-mold and tripped him repeatedly. He neither cared nor heeded. His mind was fixed on a tumbled cabin in the heart of the well-nigh impenetrable swamp, where he knew the murderer of Hughie Macgregor lay.

At the edge of the swamp he paused. No sign of human habitation came to him from the island. It lay silent and apparently lifeless before him. In this pocket of the hills only vagrant eddies of wind disturbed the trees. The lightning seemed to waver downward in horizontal sheets. The thunder, too, seemed to leap madly back and forth from hill to hill. The rain pouring from the plethoric heavens was fast making the swamp an inland sea.

BILLY patted the revolver in his pocket to assure himself it still was there, and entered on the last lap of the weary pursuit. After slipping and scrambling from one hummock to the next, often splashing in water up to his thighs, he felt the firm ground of the island rise beneath his feet. He gulped a few mouthfuls of air and broke into a stumbling lope.

He had gone scarcely a rod when through the tangle of trees he saw a small square of yellow light dead ahead. He repressed an insane desire to shout aloud, and increased his pace, tugging at the revolver in his pocket as he ran.

The light came from a sashless window in a rude hut built between two pines. Billy skirted the corner and came full upon a doorless entrance. He entered, the weapon ready in his hand.

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In the center of the unfloored hut a makeshift table held a fluttering tallow candle beside which lay a celluloid collar, a bow tie, and a bunch of kinky grayish wool. On an upended box near by there reposed a a small hand-bag. It was open, and revealed a cut loaf of rye bread and a chunk of bacon from which the wrapper had been torn. From one of the low rafters there hung a white shirt and a long, black coat. The rest of the cabin was shrouded in darkness.

Of the Toad himself there was no sign!

Billy halted nonplused! He could see nothing else, could hear nothing; yet he felt the fine hairs on the back of his neck bristle. Somewhere in the shadows beyond the candle-light he felt that two eyes were fixed upon him in wild surprise.

He took a step forward. In the bluish flicker of lightning he thought he detected a shadow heavier than the rest, as of a figure crouched against the wall. He pointed the revolver and cried sharply—

"You there, *hands up!*"

Only the slither of rain in the thatch overhead answered.

Billy waited five tense seconds. He took another step forward, and simultaneously the darkness vomited flame! He ducked instinctively, and with frenzied haste pulled the trigger.

Six steely clicks responded before he realized, with a desperate sinking of his heart, that he had neglected to load it after receiving it from Ferris! He laughed bitterly as he hurled the useless weapon at the steady spurt of fire.

Then all went mercifully black before him. One of the Toad's bullets had found its mark.

How long Billy lay there unconscious he did not know. It could not have been long, for when he opened his eyes he noticed that the candle had not burned down appreciably. The Toad was seated on the box beside the table, so near that Billy could have stirred him with his foot. His body was sunk forward; his corded, ape-like forearms were dropped between his knees, his left hand holding the wrist of the right in which he held a blue service revolver—Hughie Macgregor's. His head was turned to the door in an attitude of strained listening. The red-lidded, snake-like eyes, set deeply in the yellow-and-black blotched face, blazed with malignant ferocity.

Billy half closed his eyes while he awaited the passing of the red devils that danced before them. His head buzzed like a sputtering arc-lamp, and on the back of his neck, where the Toad's bullet had creased him, a fiery steel band seemed biting into the flesh.

From the chaos of dinning thoughts there gradually emerged the question, "What to do? What? *What?*" He lay there helpless as an infant, at the mercy of an abandoned creature who would as soon kill him as eat. He realized that his life hung on the thinnest of threads. An untoward movement, a breath drawn too deeply would arouse the slumbering murder-lust. In morbid anticipation, Billy felt the stunning impact of the leaden pellets.

His flesh crawled in sickening apprehension. He wondered whether it would hurt long or be a swift, excruciating pang, succeeded by whelming oblivion. God! it was not fated that he should be snuffed out like this—without a fighting chance for life! There must be some way out!

FAR overhead, the thunder crashed in wrenching, tearing salvos. The lightning played incessantly. But the hut stood so far down, and was so canopied over by arching trees, that in it there penetrated but an unearthly, bluish phosphorescence. The rain sifted through the thatch with an awsome, suggestive scraping.

Billy raised his lids the barest fraction of an inch and looked from below them at his jailer. The latter had shifted his gaze from the doorway and was watching him with the alertness of a cobra coiled to strike. Billy scarcely breathed.

The Toad evidently knew that Billy was not dead. Why then did he not finish his captive? He could not be playing the game of cat and mouse. Such finesse of cruelty was contrary to his savage instincts. Something stayed the brute's hand. Billy pondered over the situation for a long time.

The Toad could have had no intimation of the fact that he was being followed. Of that Billy was certain; for the suspended coat and shirt indicated unflurried deliberation. The open hand-bag suggested that he had even prepared to eat. There was no sign of moisture on the coat or on the bag, hence the Toad had arrived at the hut before the storm broke. He must have reached

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his refuge at the same time that Billy was nerving himself to begin the ascent of the path. But something had sent him cowering against the wall in the thick of the shadow. What had it been? There was but one explanation that would meet the facts.

Billy remembered how, on the knoll, the savage onslaught of the tempest had affected him, prepared him for what was coming; and he could easily picture to himself what chilling terror must have gripped the fugitive when the flood-gates of heaven opened upon his unsuspecting head. To the primitive mind it must have seemed that the Omnipotent was about to exact the punishment which mortal hand had been tardy to execute, and in his abject cowardice he had sought the darkest corner of the hut to find sanctuary from the Divine wrath.

The instinct of self-preservation had crooked his finger around the trigger when he had fired at Billy; now the fear of facing the awesome night alone, or worse still, in the company of a murdered victim, restrained him from finishing his job. In his dread of the unknown menace that encompassed him, he craved the society of a fellow human. Far-fetched though the theory seemed, it was the only one that dovetailed with the circumstances.

Not consecutively, as here set forth, but confusedly and by painful degrees, Billy arrived at this hypothesis, and gradually the mist cleared from his mind. His faculties emerged keen as needle-points. He might yet escape, if his postulation that the Toad was pregnable on one point proved correct! It was his only chance. Win or lose, it was imperative that he act at once.

HE DREW a long, fretful sigh as of one who comes back reluctantly from the shadow. He opened his eyes to their widest extent. In the steely glare of lightning they looked glassy, unnatural. The muscles of the Toad's hand tightened about his revolver. Billy moved not a muscle, but kept his eyes fixed in that cataleptic stare at the rafter above him.

A long minute passed. The Toad's hand relaxed slowly. Again Billy sighed, and was relieved to see that his action had evoked no responsive hostile movement. Billy rolled his eyes upward and back until only the whites were visible. His jaw sagged little by little until it stood wide open.

The negro's beady eyes, fascinated by the weird spectacle, never left Billy's face. Tiny beads of sweat gathered on the simian forehead. He licked his loose lips nervously.

Billy's eyes returned to their fixed contemplation of the rafter. He noticed the signs of distress on the bestial face, and was madly glad. But he permitted no trace of his exultation to appear. In the part he was playing—and he was playing for his life—he dared exhibit no trace of human emotion. His every action, his every word and look must be that of one back from the dead. He was playing on the negro's superstition—the dominant, controlling impulse of that race that no amount of education can overcome—and he would play on that string until it snapped! But he had to play carefully—ah! with so delicate a touch that the Toad would respond without being aware.

"Hughie—Hughie—old—pal," was his first low utterance. "Is—ah! Is it you?"

Dead silence, a silence so intense that for the moment the rumble of the thunder above was unheard. Came only the whistling breath of the negro. His eyes bulged frightfully from their sockets. The light spots on his cheeks where the black had rubbed off assumed a ghastly greenish hue.

"Your robe — is — white — as — snow, Hughie. I—I can see through it. And I see the deep red cuts, Hughie. Your eyes are bright as fire; and from your mouth there darts a blood-red sword of flame!"

In white noonday and in cold type the words seem like the rankest kind of nonsense, but there in the hut they held the negro spellbound. He did not see the stealthy inching of Billy's fingers to a heavy block of wood that lay below the table.

Blood will tell in moments of breaking stress. At any other time, under any other conditions, it is doubtful whether the Toad would have been the least bit affected by Billy's gibberish; but the wild night, the hollow reverberations of thunder, the rasp of rain in the thatch, and the ghostly waver of lightning curdled his blood. He was translated to the dim reaches where emotion overrules reason. The sweat was rolling in rivulets down the creature's face. The loose lips were drawn in a taut line over his yellow teeth. The small eyes were round with credulous apprehension.

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"The graves yawn, and give up their dead; and the murdered arise and stand forth," Billy continued pitilessly. "And they point with their white skeleton hands at the killer, and——"

Billy broke off. He raised himself on his elbow with the strength not of muscle but of will. His eyes had lost their vacant expression. They were riveted on a point above the negro's head and behind him. White, freezing horror was stamped on his face.

"Good God! Behind you—*Look!*" he cried, and calling to him every shred of power he held in reserve, he hurled his missile even as the negro turned. It missed *him!*

THE Toad turned swiftly. The blue service revolver fell unheeded to the ground. He half rose to his feet, snarling like a creature at bay. His hands, with fingers horribly crooked, were held defensively before him. Then suddenly he screamed and tore with both hands at his throat as if something were choking him. From his ashen lips there issued the frantic gibberish of a man in mortal terror. And then slowly he toppled over and sprawled out with his face to the ground.

When sanity returned to Billy, he found himself on his feet, brandishing the revolver, and chattering hysterically, "Get up! *get up!* get up!"

The Toad twitched not a muscle. He was either stunned or—— At the thought Billy's overwrought nerves gave way. He laughed loud and long as at some irresistibly funny joke, until the absurdity of his action struck him, and he desisted abruptly. With an effort he pulled himself together and stirred the recumbent figure with his toe. There was no movement. Conquering a feeling of repulsion, he seized one of the bent arms and turned the Toad on to his back.

The face that grinned up at him was hideous in its fixity. It was the face of one who had looked on hell and found it more than he could bear! Billy shuddered.

"I didn't hit him, thank God!" was his fervent exclamation, as his searching glance noted no abrasion of the skin. "He was scared to death, simply scared to death! He saw something behind him that wasn't there. Ugh!"

He tried to straighten up, but his knees buckled under his weight. The artificial strength he had invoked by might of will deserted him. Of a sudden it came over him that he was very, very tired. On hands and knees—it seemed beyond his ability to rise to his feet—he made his way to the corner of the hut farthest removed from the lifeless heap near the table.

He proceeded laboriously. Each forward hunching of the knees was a painful effort. His head sagged heavily down between his arms and rolled from shoulder to shoulder. He did not notice when the candle on the table behind him sputtered and went out, for his eyes were closed in sheer weariness.

He bumped his head against some obstruction, and fretfully tried to steer around it. Again he bumped his head sharply. He raised his head and opened his eyes. He had reached the wall without knowing it!

With a grateful sigh, he relaxed his muscles, and was about to curl down luxuriously to steep himself in sleep when a picture flashed across the screen of his consciousness.

He saw a mob of grim-visaged men gathering furtively from all points of the city. The light from the arc-lamp on the secluded corner fell on the wet shoulders of their raincoats, and slithered from the long barrels of the weapons under their arms. They talked little and then only in monosyllables.

They milled restlessly about. The storm had not deterred them from their purpose; rather it aided them to carry it out. It would serve to cover their advance. Their avowed purpose was to get the Toad. Billy knew too well the temper of the men to think they would desist until every hovel that might harbor the fugitive murderer had been razed to the ground.

There would be bloody work in "Smoky Row" that night. Many a good life would be snuffed out in a moment of irresponsible passion. Men would commit deeds that later they would give their right hands to recall. And it was all so unnecessary.

Billy alone had the means to stop them. If the news of the Toad's horrible death in the solitary cabin reached the mob before they set out from the rendezvous at Hager's Corners, grim carnage would be averted.

Wide awake now, Billy rose shakily to his feet. His bunched muscles protested harrowingly. He took out his watch and

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moved to the doorway where the lightning brought out the hands in sharp relief.

It was 11:40. There was yet time!

HOW Billy ever made his way back to Edgmont that wild night, he never could recall. He has a confused memory of plunging into water above his head, and of swimming blindly for ages; of a mad scramble over fallen trees and through dense undergrowth; of sliding down clay banks, treacherous as if coated with ice; of fighting for breath every step of the way.

He reached the corner saloon at last, and hurtled through the swinging doors.

"Whad-the-hell!" came from the dumfounded bartender. He grasped a bung-starter and placed his left hand on the bar, preparatory to vaulting it. The three or four drinkers gaped in wide-mouthed astonishment.

Billy looked a sight! His coat was in ribbons, one trousers leg was amputated at the knee, the rest, by some miracle, still clung to him. His face was terribly slashed and bruised. His hair was matted tightly on his head. He appeared the storm-fiend incarnate!

"I'm Billy Endicott, of—*Courier-Journal*," Billy gasped as he limped across the floor. "I'm not crazy or drunk. Want to use your telephone."

The bartender recovered his wits in a twinkling. Before Billy had covered a space of ten feet, he had deftly uncorked a bottle and filled a glass of wine which he handed to the reporter.

"You look as if you need something to brace you," he said kindly. "Take her easy. You'll spoil your shirt-front slobbering like that," he remarked facetiously.

Billy grinned and wiped his chin with an unsteady, grimy hand.

"Thanks!" he returned from a grateful heart. "Now, the telephone?"

The bartender indicated a glass-paneled office extending across half the width of the room at the end of the bar.

Billy hurried to it, water spurting from his shoes at every step. A roll-top desk, near a big safe, held the telephone. Billy sank down before it in a swivel chair and jerked the receiver from the hook.

ONCE in communication with the night city-editor, he simmered down, and told his story simply, unaffectedly, yet with a few deft touches that brought out the events of the night with startling vividness.

The night-city, at his desk in the *Courier-Journal* building, gave a whoop of delight! He drew a pad of paper toward him and wrote feverishly, while he kept the receiver glued to his ear. It was clean copy that Billy was sending in. No rewrite man should touch it. It was Billy's story!

Billy talked on without a break. The men from the bar-room gathered in a knot at the office door, which Billy, in his haste, had neglected to close, and were listening with rapt attention.

The news percolated to the outside, and the group at the door of the six-by-six office was rapidly augmented by new arrivals, until those in the forefront, pushed forward by the eager audience behind, pressed closely about Billy's chair. Only then did he look up.

"Gus," he said wearily to the bartender, addressing him by the appellation common to all bartenders, from Baffin's Bay to the Caribbean, "Gus, shove these guys out, and shut the door!"

Then he turned back to the telephone and continued his story.

"That's all," he finished. "Some beat, eh what?" he chortled in self-congratulation. Then as the thought of the mob swept over him: "Briggs, I'd almost forgotten. You know about the mob that meets at Hager's Corners tonight at two? You do. Rush a wagon-load of extras to them as fast as you can tear them off the press. For God's sake, stop them!"

"GUS," the bartender, coming in a few minutes later with a tray of steaming beverages and a heaping plate of sandwiches, tiptoed out again, softly closing the door behind him.

He raised a pudgy hand, palm outward. The hum of conversation ceased, while all faces were turned inquiringly in his direction.

"Gents," he said huskily, "this place is closed fer tonight. He—" pointing a stubby thumb over his shoulder— "he's snoozin'."

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THE FLUENT ADVENTURER

By EDGAR WALLACE

"DRINK," said Hoke, "is no worse than excessive sobriety, as I know."

He finished the peg at a gasp and turned the tumbler bottom upward.

I called my butler.

"*The* sahib will drink," I said, and Lal Ram Singh sent the soda sizzling into an amber foundation. He was infinitely polite to Hoke, despite his dirty and indescribably hued khaki, for my guest was an undoubted Sahib, though somewhat soiled.

Hoke shaded his eyes and stared across the shimmering plain. His battered *topi* reposed on a chair, and I observed that he was thinner of hair than he had been in those far-off days when I sent him to Modopore jail for a barefaced larceny. His face was lean and burned to the color of smoked oak, his blue eyes were set about with a tiny network of lines—each line a joke at the world's expense.

"It's rum—plains," he said. "If you'd spent a few years in sight of nothin' more lowly than a ten-thousand-foot mountain, with the Himalayas at the back of your neck an' the Hindu Kush stickin' up over the horizon, you'd appreciate a level bit of dirt."

He implied that he had reached British India by a circuitous route, and I questioned him.

"Russia, China an' Tibet was the sure-enough route," he admitted, "an' I can not tell a lie."

He shaded his eyes, directing them along the straight white road which leads due north.

"A confederate of mine is hanging 'round," he explained. "A Chink, an' a gentleman—the terms bein', for this occasion only, synonymous an' analogous."

He drank the second peg.

"I was sayin' that the drink habit was no more reprehensible than a too rigid observance of temp'rance principles, an' that I can prove."

He settled himself into the most comfortable chair available, bit off the end of a rank cheroot and lit it. Then he began:

FOUR years agone I was stranded in Moscow, havin' been attracted to that city by the specious artifice of an erstwhile friend, who wrote me that for unadulterated foolishness the Moscovians was pretty hard to beat.

Deemin' it unwise to let the weeds fructify between my sole leather, I hied me to the promised land, travelin' from Hull by a week-in-lovely-Stockholm excursion-boat to the Swederies, an' takin' pot luck on a timber-boat thence to Petersburg. After that I had to pay, because I couldn't twist the Petersburg-Moscow railway with the tale of havin' lost me excursion-ticket, nor pretend that I was the owner's English nephew as I did on the timber-boat.

I reached Canaan one afternoon and met Wiggles at the station. He didn't say much to me, nor me to him, because he was hand-

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cuffed an' in charge of two custodians of the law.

It transpired that they'd incarcerated him at the Moscow races over a little matter of three shells an' a ball, an' he was en route to Riga, *pour passer le temps*.

For three weeks I was in residence in a little house off the Nevski Prospekt, my host bein' a sportin' adventurer named Tom. His unchristian appendage I do not recall. He was American, an' played the races an' such other instruments in the easy-money orchestra as came to hand.

Seekin' my livelihood, I discovered that the simple Moscovian received my many an' varied schemes for parting him from his dirty copecks with the enthusiasm which the name of Bill Taft evokes in the residential quarters of Oyster Bay.

I decided to move east, having some acquaintance with the route, an' my departure was accelerated by an incident which illustrates the value of patience, and the reward which comes to all who follow the golden path of virtue. For passin' a fashionable hotel one morning, before the dawn, I had the felicity of assistin' a fellow human to his dugout.

A young nobleman, flushed with wine an' the bountiful spirit of youth, had been thrown from the hotel in consequence of certain behavior which in our large charity may be condoned and pardoned.

If he danced upon a table where the governor of Omskopskoff was givin' an early mornin' supper-party to his son's fiancée, he was actin' accordin' to the precept which advises us to let our lights shine an' our inherent talents find expression.

He struck the pavement with a dull, sickenin' thud, an' I picked him up undamaged; the pavement alone sufferin', for he hit it with his cheek.

Lacrimosity bein' a failin' of the Russians, he cried most piteously, askin' me if he'd erred on the side of unconventionality. He produced his pocketbook, and he of me demanded in the freshest French that I should take him back to the hotel to pay the damage.

Eventually I got him home an' left him to the care of a faithful retainer with side-whiskers—takin' the pocketbook as a souvenir of a friendship begun under such pleasant circumstances.

That mornin' I glided east, being tired of the vicinity.

THERE was a feller that had a large store in one of them little slosh towns on the Trans-Siberian Railway. His cognomen was Ivanovitch Gregorititzki. The town was the town of Lomosk, an' it was all dirty street, galvanized iron, electric light an' drink.

I came there travelin' first class by favor of the guard.

"Mike," says I, when I fell aboard at Tomsk, "I will assail your ears with a confession which will in all probability suffuse your cheek with hot blushes."

"Say on, O excellent prince," says he in the extravagant vernacular of his class.

"I go," says I, "to the ever-changin', never quite changed, but always-going-to East, and I have not with me the wherewithal or the which-what-how, as the case may be, to secure the comforts of travel for which my soul craves. Nevertheless—" an' I slipped two five-ruble notes in his right hook—"notwithstandin'," I says, an' winked.

"Excellent, illustrious and extraordinarily beneficent person," he says, moved to tears, "you shall travel first class though the accredited voucher issued by my autocratic and monopolistic government be inscribed 'second' in the bluest of ink."

Thus I progressed by jerks to the town of my large desire, an' if you ask me—you bein' a magistrate an' predisposed to handin' out the trite morality of your class—whether it would not have been cheaper to have secured the legitimate ticket in the first place, since the difference between the first and second class fares is but fifteen rubles—I say no.

For I had no ticket at all.

Return we now to our Ivanovitch Gregorititzki. He was a millionaire, and I bore with me a letter fairly inscribed on the ornate stationery of the Hotel de Paris, Moscow. It was from one Prince Zameffiski, or words to that effect, and it commended to Ivanovitch one H. B. Hoke, a world traveler, a person of quiet tastes, an' a prince of true-hearts. It dealt specifically, voluminously and in detail with my qualities—my love of freedom, my passion for independence, my disinterestedness, an' generally speakin' reviewed my life from registration to pass-book. It was a monument of incisive analysis, an' displayed a knowledge of the character, habits and customs of the Hoke fauna which did credit alike to the

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subject of the monograph and the inventive faculties of the painstakin' author—I say this in all modesty.

Thus I came to Lomosk, on the edge of Siberia; that waste of snow an' ice an' the blue-black ink of the ardent novelist. The sun stood at eighty degrees in the shade when, tossing aside the parasitical porters who would rob me of my most precious possession—to wit, money—I strode along the uneven road which led to the town.

There were other pilgrims too poor to enlist the service of the one drunken droshky-driver—Jews, peasants, and a few Chinks who, attracted by the accursed lure of gold, had left their Manchurian pigsties to wallow in the grime of a Siberian city.

One such man accosted me.

"Little father," he says in halting Russian, "let me speak with you, in the name of heaven."

"Speak on, O Chink," I says, setting down my battered grip.

"Father," he began, "I am a Chinaman."

"You surprise and alarm me," I says gravely. "From your blue shirt, your white felt boots, and the two meters of superfluous hair which I observe you have braided into a queue, I should have thought you were a Scotch comedian. Explain this disguise."

Somewhat dazed by my verbosity, the Chink proceeded.

I would ask you to visualize the scene. The broad lumpy road, white with dust, the unpainted and hummin' telegraph-poles stretchin' gauntly from the station to the city, an' the blue Chinaman elucidatin' his proposition to me as I stand with my back to the telegraph-pole aforesaid.

"Little uncle of beautiful nephews," he says, "I have come from the village of Ching Wung Hai in the Manchurian country, and I have been prospecting for auriferous deposits."

He dived his emaciated hand into the mysterious depths of his heathen shirt and produced a little bag. From that small but significant receptacle, he poured forth to his palm a stream of metalliferous dust that reflected the dancin' sunlight of the brazen sky.

"Precious relative," says he, "I am a poor but scrupulous man, and I hunger; and knowing that the bureaucracy of this vast dominion insensibly gravitates toward unearned increment, I dare not offer my hoard to the banks for sale. Give me, I beg of you, five rubles for this, my labors, and I will tell you where more may be obtained."

I looks at the stuff.

"Carry my bag into the town, find me an umbrageous beer garden," I says, "and we will discuss this matter protractedly."

Whereupon the Chink, with a beatific countenance, lugged the gladstone to his shoulder, and we proceeded along the broad and pleasant way to the caravansary.

HAVING discovered a room none too redundant of comfort or reminiscent of the fair lavender fields of Mitcham, England, I returned to the stoop to drink a glass of tea, flavored with lemon.

Here awaited me, crouchant, my Chink.

"My celestial heathen, if you will pardon the paradox of terms," says I, "you offered, for a meager remuneration, to direct my haltin' footsteps to the land of wealth."

"Little cousin," he corrects, "to the place from whence I delved the samples I have shown you."

"Chink," I says, "I admire the honesty which produces the distinction. I myself can show you where brass-filings are procurable—for brass-filings your auriferous specimens most incontestably are."

He rose up with a look of pained weariness.

"Since," he says, with a sigh, "it is evident that you are no peach for my plucking, but, mayhap, a fellow seeker after the soft and balmy goods that flourish east of Tomsk, it only remains for me to demand the few copecks to which my bag-carrying labors entitle me."

I shook my head.

"Credit yourself with two rubles' worth of experience," I says, "an' be thankful that you have discovered H. B. Hoke of Manchester in a melting mood; elsewise," I says, "there would have been sad hearts in Ching Wung Hai tonight. Ere you go, child," I says as he moved disconsolately away, "tell me your name."

"Li," he says.

"A sweet name," says I.

A little later I went to call on Ivanovitch and had the good fortune to strike him midway between homesickness and delirium tremens. He was quite conscious when I reached his store.

He sat in his private office, shootin' the

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dates off an American calendar, and I could tell from the fact that he wore his shirt inside his trousers that he was a gentleman. Fate, ever kind, led me through the store at the moment his supply of cartridges had temporarily failed to connect with his instant requirements. I found his private secretary behind a bale of skins, an' his cashier on the le'ward side of a butter-keg. They were normally intoxicated, but informative.

"Is it," I says in Russian, "that the master of this establishment magnificent is on view?"

"He is within range, O my father," says the private secretary. "Do you desire his ear?"

"Not passionately," I replied, "for I am no collector of grisly relics. I am, in fact, H. B. Hoke of Manchester, and I have a line of goods to show him which can not fail to charm and please."

"You will find our beloved superior," says the cashier, "in the office *en face*. Ring twice and dodge."

I STEPPED forward, traversing the fifty yards of warehouse with a caution born of sorrow. The door of the private office was open, and Ivanovitch, with his head bowed in his arms, was crying on to his blotting-pad.

"I have no more cartridges," he sobs, "and the pink lobster which is crawling about the ceiling will escape."

He was a big fat man, with a well-oiled head; and my heart went out to him.

"Bear up," I says kindly. "Even a pink lobster is entitled to his chance."

"Nobody loves me," moans Ivanovitch. "I am an outcast away from home and mother. Oh, why? Oh, why?"

I calmed and soothed him, an' by and by he began to take notice. An' the first thing he noticed was that I was of the Anglo-Saxon race. Like a fool I'd washed myself before I left Tomsk.

How I talked with that man! Argued with him! How I ransacked the precious store-chest of my vocabulary to convince him! I produced the letter. I drew it from the interior of my pocket-case and cast it before him.

"Little father," I says, "peruse, investigate, and apologize."

"I can't read," he says.

"What?" I says bitterly. "Is all my laborious invention futile? Is all my faith, hope, charity and commercial enterprise without avail? Oh, shame, shame!"

He squirmed.

"Come and have a drink," he says. "We will discuss this matter over a pint of vodka."

Did I say pint? Maybe I'm more accurate in eventuality than in anticipation. He drank an' drank, an' between lubrications I expanded the exports of my beloved country. I sold him a traction-engine, a motor-car, a hundred bales of cotton goods, ten crates of china, an' a gold watch. I delivered the watch then and there.

Such is the unimaginative nature of a brutish peasantry, degraded by vicious example an' wholly unrelieved by the refinement which wealth brings in its train, that Ivanovitch, though ready to order, refused to offer those securities which are the very life-blood of commerce.

"Such, noble father," says I, "such is your standin' an' integrity that I shall ask for no more than a thousand rubles in advance."

"Not a copeck," says Ivanovitch.

"Five hundred rubles," I says, "is little to ask of one whose name an' reputation enhance the fair name of this thrivin' and siberious city——"

"Not a copeck," says Ivanovitch. "By twelve-saints-off-the-reel, you get nothing from me, Lord Hoke."

With such definition of purpose so emphatically adumbrated, what else could I do but retire?

"Little father," says I in parting, "Manchester shall ring with this."

"I do not believe there is such a place," says Ivanovitch.

Into the sad world, crushed by the inflexible intelligence of the man, I, H. B. Hoke, who never in me long an' confident career turned me back upon easy money, went forth. An' I tell you, that old man Ivanovitch just oozed affluence. From top thatch to concrete he was all wealth.

As I perambulated the street I ran against Li. Him I beckoned.

"As brigand to brigand," I says, "what chance has a son of the West in this degradin' side-slip?"

"Friend," says the Chink remarkably affable, "the lads of this village are so hot that they wear asbestos boots. I have traveled the world over," says this Chink,

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"from 'Frisco to Dulwich, from Singapore, where me wealthy compatriots go ridin' in swansdown motor-cars, to Liverpool, where they take in washin'. An' I say," says this Chink, impressive, "that Lomosk is the worst hunting-country that ever ached the eyes of the disapprovin' heavens."

"For why, brother robber?" says I.

"Because," says that Chink, lowerin' his voice, "nobody worth the twistin' is ever sober enough to do anything foolish. Bein' drunk is the normal state of humanity."

What that Chink said was right. I sat down an' watched it. There were three high-class drunkeries an' six low-class dives, an' they only shut their doors for half an hour every day to count the money. An' the citizens of this city was divided into two classes: them that started drinkin' in the early mornin' an' kept it up till night —that was the low bourgeoisie an' people that worked for a livin'—an' them that started drinkin' at night an' kept it up till mornin'—an' they were the aristocracy an' gentry an' such privileged members of the community as could afford to sleep all day.

It took the average business man two hours to get in a normal state of mind. I might have booked a few orders then, only there was always enough of the night crowd around to see the danger an' rescue their poor sober friends from my machinations.

Never have I seen such depravity; never have me fine moral perceptions been so lacerated.

"This," I says to the Chink, meetin' him one day, "is a condition of affairs callin' for instant if not immediate redress."

Then I lay down to me work of regeneration. It made me feel good; a sort of holy calm settled on my soul.

I have said in my life things detrimental to the Chinese. I have on exuberant occasions assisted at their demise with interest and pleasure. But for Li I have nothing but praise.

Together we prospected Lomosk. We found the main poison-store near the railway. By arduous and patient inquiry we learned that no more liquor was due for a week. It was an interesting store; it had no windows, an' one door, an' that door solid enough to resist the late lamented Carrie Nation. On one pretext or another I was in the vicinity of the depository all day.

I was there when the wholesaler came to deal out the daily requirements. I was there when the foul spot was closed at night, double locked, chained, an' generally conserved.

ONE fair mornin' Lomosk rose to discover that the liquor was not. Some hard-hearted philanthropist had plugged the keyhole with lead, had poured lead shot into its inside works so that key did not bite, nor ward snick.

At first they treated the matter as a joke, but slowly the dreadful news leaked out—slowly the measure of the catastrophe dawned upon Lomosk. The miscreant, or reformer, had done his, or their, fell work only too well. Risin' to an ungovernable panic, attempts were made to smash the door, but alas, the stout ironclad portal which kept the thief out also excluded the honest mercer with charmin' impartiality.

The day passed; the vodka crop was failin'; one broken drunkery closed its blue-washed doors. Strong men looked at one another an' shook hands. They was too empty to talk. An' a change imperceptible but apparent came over Lomosk. The merchant sat listlessly in his office, the clerk hung haggard over his desk, the droshky-driver sat on his box holdin' his reins with nerveless fingers.

In twenty-four hours Lomosk was sober, an' then I got busy.

I sold anything I could find in a catalog, from brass idols to teethin' powder. I collected sums on account of order, which even to me, used as I am to the agglomeration of wealth in all its forms, seem fabulous an' undreamed of.

Nor was me humble but painstakin' confederate idle. That potential wearer of the yellow button drove a thrivin' an' prosperous trade. He ransacked the bowels of the earth for his stock. He disposed of mines which Cæsar never knew, at a price which would not have deceived the clients of an English bucket-shop.

Then one afternoon I called on Ivanovitch, havin' by chance discovered the catalog of a patent washin'-machine manufacturer.

I found him heaped in his chair. The poor fellow was in an advanced condition of sobriety. He smiled in a wan, wan manner as I entered.

"I don't want anything," he says, before

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I'd opened my mouth. "I'll pay nothin' on account."

My heart leapt in an instant from palpitating life into cold storage. The sickenin' sense of failure permeated my bein'; the soap-works odor of disaster stole across my sunny landscape.

"Little benefactor of the virtuous," I faltered, "is it that the appallin' misadventure which has lain like a pall across this city is to be dissipated—is it true that the liquor has arrived?"

I could see no other explanation of the sudden *volte face*, but Ivanovitch shook his head.

"It will be two days before that arrives," he says with a snap. "But what I want to say to you is of more far-reaching importance. I have on account of orders credited to the bad debt side of my ledger some fifteen hundred rubles which temporarily repose in your right-hand trousers pocket; also on your earnest and disinterested advice I have purchased about two kilos of brass-filings from a decadent Mongol of plausible speech. This mornin'," he says, "I have taken counsel with Colonel Cezaracieff, the Chief of Police, and we have summarized our conclusions under three general heads, namely:

"My good money, fruit of a life of patient industry, is for the moment short-circuited and is charging your (possibly) illicit batteries.

"Communal interests demand that wealth shall not go out of the country.

"It is advisable, therefore, to throw your estate into chancery pending the delivery of the goods."

I wandered forth into the hard world, dazed and depressed, my ideals shattered, my faith in sobriety shaken to its very foundations. Thinking that the case of Ivanovitch might conceivably be exceptional, I made other calls, only to be met with a frigidity, a heartless skepticism, an' an ominous and exact appreciation of the duty of capital, which boded ill to my exchequer. And the Chink, whom I sought out, was equally perturbed—though, thanks to a lifetime's saturation of Confucianism, philosophical.

"I think we will two-step strategically," he said. "It is evident that we have overlooked one important fact: sobriety carried to excess produces super-normality."

That night we folded our tents an' stole away to the station, avoidin' the garish beams of the well-lit passenger department, but modestly seekin' the goods-yard, where wagons, coyly side-tracked from observation, waited their departure.

We crept stealthily across the line, hiding behind such merchandise as afforded us shelter. At length we came to a likely string of trucks, and our determination was strengthened when we heard two base peasants, attired in the uniform of the railway, speaking.

"O little father," says one, "this bunch of rolling-stock goes eastward in the morning."

"Tonight," says the other; "to which end, to the glory of Saint Inokente, I have examined the couplings."

That was good enough. We began a rapid search of the train and at last found a big covered truck. It had high, barred windows, and one door was open. Into this we crept, and, seeking the farthermost corner, we crouched down and waited.

Three hours later we were shunted on to the main line. Then, of a sudden, the big door of the truck was pulled open, and went rumbling back on its slide. A voice in the darkness said in Russian:

"Get inside, troublesome pigs, and be quick; for the train departs for the dawn, and time is short."

Half a dozen men came grunting into the car, chucking their heavy bundles before them; the door was shut and soon after the train moved on. It drew up, as far as I could judge, by the station platform, and instantly I was the unseen and silent witness of audible consternation. There was a commotion an' an excited coming and going which, in my overwrought condition, brought joy an' peace.

I heard Ivanovitch.

"Are you sure you've searched the train, little Colonel?"

"From engine to guard's van," says another voice; "from smokestack to tail-light—they're still in the town."

"They've got two thousand rubles of mine," moans Ivanovitch, an' by the hearty an' soulful responses that followed, I gathered that all my clients had come to press me to stay.

It appeared that the policeman they'd stationed to watch my hotel had not discovered my departure till I'd gone.

"He's in the town," says the Colonel's

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voice. "My brave men will arrest him tonight."

Nothin' more of consequence transpired. The train moved on; an' oblivious to the presence of our feller passengers, we dozed, me an' the Chink together. In the early hours of the mornin' he woke me; the train was joggin' along slowly.

"I deem it expedient, brother," he says, "to dissociate myself from this train. By my computation, an' from the reconnaissance I have made from the window, we are within walking distance of a little town where I have a friend, engaged in the slow but sure pursuit of a competency in the laundry business. He will hide us until our recent operations have passed into the traditional legendry of this country."

An admirable disputant, this Chink, and one for whom I have more than ordinary affection.

Pickin' our way in the dim light across the snorin' figures of the other passengers, we reached the door.

I pulled it, but it yielded not. Then the Chink pulled it. Then we both pulled it. But alas! Like the proud-necked Cæsar turnin' down the claims of Publius Cimber it was fixed an' immovable as the northern star which hath no feller in the firmament. I looks at the Chink, an' he returns my startled gaze; an' then one of the sleepers awoke.

"Cease," he says. "Cease, little father; for the door is locked."

"For why, child of the saints?" I says.

"Because," he says, "this is a prison-van, an' we are convicts en route for the prison at Alexandrovski."

The INCURVE

By OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

EVEN Bert Dodge, the regular third-sacker, admitted that Billy Pitt was the fastest infielder in the league. His work at the difficult corner was electrifying; he speared them from overhead, dug them out of the ground, stopped them with either hand, and always recovered in time to shoot the ball to first with apparent ease and untold grace. But like all seemingly perfect things, Billy had a weakness—he feared an incurve!

The fear of an incurve is subconscious. Billy was not a coward; he took terrific chances on the bases, he let runners slide all around him, and did not dread their spikes; but despite himself his left foot drew back each time an incurve whistled over, and as a result he either dumped a dead one down toward the pitcher or fanned foolishly.

Billy knew that save for his one weakness he was better than Bert Dodge; he knew, too, that Manager Con O'Leary wanted to make him a regular—and he knew that he'd have a much better chance with Eileen if he won a regular berth on the team. What right had a utility man to marry? Especially when Stan Wilson, stellar twirler of the Highlanders, was also a candidate for matrimonial honors.

Stan Wilson was a major-league fixture. He was generally regarded as the best young twirler in the circuit, and Pitt realized that he stood mighty little chance unless——

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But not being gifted with supernatural powers, he could not have been expected to hear the conversation which was going on even at that minute on the McCarthys' veranda.

WILSON sat there with Eileen. Over the fringe of trees which bordered the big front yard of the McCarthys' suburban home, the big, jolly Summer moon smiled and shed its silvery rays. Stan, being something of a poet, had remarked on the quiet grandeur of the scene. Then quite suddenly his fingers touched those of Miss McCarthy and her hand was imprisoned in his.

He proposed: sentimentally, poetically. Her answer was kind but strictly to the point.

"I'm sorry, Stan, but I can't."

"Can't!" he echoed stubbornly, "Why?"

"Oh because——"

"What?"

"I—that is——"

His fingers crushed hers. She tried to jerk them away.

"Let go, Stan! You're hurting me!"

"You're in love with some one else?"

"What business is that——"

"Don't pull that stuff on me, Eileen. I'm in love with you, and you know it. If there's another man you love and you tell me—I'll get out of the running. But if there ain't, I'll make you refuse me every night—until—until you accept me!"

She admired his determination.

"Yes, there is another man."

"Who?"

"Mr. Pitt——"

"Not that yellow utility man of the Marines—" he asked hotly—"Not *him?*"

She rose and faced him furiously.

"Yes, I do mean Billy Pitt of the Marines, and he's too much of a man to sit down and low-rate a rival—and he's a better ball-player and more of a man than you ever will be!"

"He's yellow—deep!"

"That's not true!"

"How can you make a woman understand—even you? Haven't you watched him day after day? Haven't you seen him pull away from the plate whenever there's a fast one coming close? Is that nervy? Nix! It isn't! Why Eileen there isn't a twirler in the circuit who doesn't laugh at him; there isn't one who hasn't got his number, all salted away and ready. I wish to goodness I'd get a chance to pitch against him during the series here—with you at the game—I'd show you!"

BERT DODGE fell down a flight of stairs that night in the hotel and sprained his ankle. It wasn't much of an injury as injuries go, but it drove Con O'Leary nearly frantic.

"What'll I do," he howled to a select coterie, "put in Pitt on third base with the race like this?" He pointed to the evening's paper.

Millionaires	45	32	.584
Highlanders	43	35	.551
Marines	44	37	.543
Millers	42	36	.538
Oaks	42	38	.525
Indians	42	38	.525
Panthers	29	46	.387
Grays	26	51	.338

"Eight clubs in the league," he went on hotly, "and only the Panthers and the Grays out of it; and even the Panthers strengthened and going stronger every day.

"Here we are only half a game behind the Highlanders and tied up with them for a series, and now Bert Dodge goes and does a damfool stunt like falling downstairs! And there isn't a thing for me to do but put in a yellow batter on third. Oh Lordy, and they call a manager's job a pipe! The fans are looking to me to cop the rag; they don't realize that there are six teams and all going like a house afire!"

"Have a talk with Billy," counseled Jerry Rohan, the youngest and best of the twirling staff, "and put it right up to him. He's the sweetest fielding third-baseman I ever saw, and I believe even that he'd make a good hitter if he could once get that pulling-away habit slammed out of him."

The manager shook his head resignedly.

"You boys be out on the field tomorrow morning. I'm going to send Billy through a siege of batting practise that'll make his hair stand on end. And the worst of it is that they're going to put in Stan Wilson against us tomorrow—and if there's one pitcher in the league who has Pitt's number it's Wilson. I understand that they're even rushing the same girl—daughter of Mike McCarthy the contractor."

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THE next morning O'Leary sent the team on to the field, put Jerry Rohan in the box and called Pitt to the plate.

"He's goin' to feed 'em up fast and close," he warned significantly. "I want you to practise waiting until they get near you—then draw your *right* foot back a few inches—not the left—and swing sharply. The ball ought to go sizzling to right-field territory every time, if you'll hit it right. This is your chance to make good. You'd better do it if you want to stay with the Marines—we can't afford to carry dead-wood."

He nodded to Jerry, and the young phenom wound up. The ball whizzed toward the pan and about three feet away it broke sharply in.

Billy's teeth were gritted, but his innate fear overcame him and he jumped back, fanning futilely at the sphere as it passed over the heart of the rubber. Con regarded him disgustedly.

"Scared?"

"N-a-a! Can't help it. Try it again, Jerry."

Once again a fast one broke across the inside corner of the platter. This time Billy steeled himself to the effort and swung pumily. The ball dumped in front of the plate and rolled into Rohan's hands.

For an hour he tried with very little success, and it was a highly disgruntled manager who ordered him to play in the afternoon game.

"You're a good fielder—and that makes you better'n a pitcher on third."

"Who's gonna pitch for the Highlanders?" asked Billy.

"Stan Wilson."

"Oh!" Pitt's jaw shut suddenly tight. "I might surprise you," he said briefly. Billy had discovered that Wilson had called on Eileen the previous night.

"And if I could stand up to an incurve once," he told himself, "I believe that I'd be forever cured of the drawing-away habit."

THE park was jammed when the teams trotted out for practise. Not for years had the race been as close, and not for years had the Marines had such a chance for the pennant. Stan Wilson was to twirl against Jerry Rohan—two of the best men in the league; and the game meant second place in the race.

The score-boy climbed on his ladder and laboriously posted the batting orders of the teams:

MARINES	HIGHLANDERS
O'Leary, l.f.	Craig, r.f.
Pitt, 3b.	Barringer, 3b.
Collins, r.f.	Houston, c.f.
Shirley, c.f.	Trenholm, s.s.
Werner, s.s.	Conard, 1b.
Bell, 1b.	Owens, l.f.
Fremont, 2b.	Klaussen, 2b.
Lincoln, c.	Kepner, c.
Rohan, p.	Wilson, p.

Snapper Craig stepped to the plate and silence fell over the huge crowd as the umpire yelled his welcome command—

"Play ball!"

Craig was patient and received a free ticket to first. Barringer dropped a dead one in front of the plate and was nabbed at first, Craig reaching second on the play. Then Houston grounded to Fremont and was thrown out at first, but Craig, who had taken a long lead, reached third without trouble. The Highlanders were playing together—taking advantage of every little turn of the wheel.

Then after two strikes and two balls had been called, Trenholm singled sharply over second, and Craig romped across the plate with the first tally of the game. Tom Conard flied to O'Leary for the third out, and the Marines, grim and determined, came to the bat.

O'Leary, first man up, singled to center and was thrown out trying to stretch it into a double. On his way back to the bench he paused to speak encouragingly to Billy Pitt, who was grinning nervously as he glanced apprehensively at the form of Stan Wilson in the box.

"Keep that left foot anchored," counseled the manager. "If you have to pull away, bring that right foot back—that'll give you a real swipe at the ball. Get me?"

Billy nodded grimly. The crowd, always with the under dog, yelled encouragement. Pitt turned for the fraction of a second and caught sight of Eileen in the grand-stand.

"I'll show her," he gritted, "I'll show her I've got nerve."

BILLY walked to the plate to find Stan Wilson smirking evilly at him. There was something sinister in the smile, some prophecy of foul play, and Pitt trembled slightly, unconsciously.

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He knocked the caked dirt from his spikes with the heavy end of his bat, tapped the willow on the platter and gamely tried to smile.

"Stand up to the plate," invited Wilson.

"I'm up," responded Billy curtly.

"Play ball!" The umpire was impatient.

Wilson contorted through his spectacular wind-up, threw his foot far to the left as it hit the ground, and swung his twirling arm around in a sweeping, snappy arc. An incurve! Billy's heart seemed to stop beating for the second. In less time than it takes to tell it, the cold sweat of fear had broken out on his body—clammy—unpleasant. His jaw hardened. He stood straight and motionless at the plate.

A quarter-second too late he ducked. The ball, thrown straight as an arrow at his head, caromed sharply off his skull and he dropped to the ground. A shrill feminine scream of terror broke the momentary pall. Stan Wilson, in assumed concern, started forward.

Billy rose dazedly, rubbed his head and shambled to first. Con, grinning to hide his anger, joined him.

"Beaned you that time," he chortled. "But ——! You stood up to it. Want a runner?"

"N-a-a!" Billy tried to smile. "I'm a'right!"

O'Leary was happy. So the kid was game after all. Knowing that it was the last thing expected, he signaled runner and batsman for the hit-and-run.

Over shot the ball; the bat cracked against it; O'Leary shrieked "*Run!*" and Pitt was off! He rounded second like a deer and saw Bell, coaching on the third-base line, motioning him on.

Swinging wide he dashed over third, the screams of the excited crowd ringing in his ears, intoxicating him. Near home the command "*Slide!*" came stridently to his ears and he pitched daringly forward, head-first. A fraction of a second after his hand touched the plate he felt the ball jammed into his ribs, and the "Safe!" of the umpire.

The stands forced him to bow, as his fellow players helped him to the bench and bathed his head in alcohol. Then Freddy Shirley slammed a hard one between first and second, which Conard stopped with difficulty, and Collins scored with the run that gave the Marines the lead. But it was the last run of the inning.

The second inning was uneventful, but in the third the Highlanders shoved another over the plate, tieing the score.

IT WAS with two out in this session that Billy Pitt, dazed and nervous, came to the bat for the second time. The first two balls were sharp ins, which drove him back from the plate, and both were called balls. Then Stan reconsidered and tried to tempt Billy with an out. Pitt stepped across the plate, connected nicely and dropped a single over short; but he died on first when Collins flied to Craig for the third out.

The game rocked along for innings. The crowd, grown somewhat comatose, stared at the score-board which showed—

HIGHLANDERS	101	000
MARINES	200	00

In the last half of the sixth, Pitt came again to the bat. As he walked to the plate, the girl in the stand waved at him—and Wilson saw! She loved this utility man!

Red hate was in his heart as he slammed the first ball—a terrific incurve—directly at the utility man's head. Billy ducked swiftly. It was a sheer case of nerve now, and Billy smiled!

The girl saw the smile and it made her happy; Con O'Leary saw the smile and felt that he had a new third-baseman. Pitt had been through the trial-fires and had made good. And Stan Wilson saw that smile and determined to "get" his man!

The next one, to use baseball vernacular, had whiskers on it. Again Billy pulled back—just far enough—and it was called a ball. His manner of ducking, though, was no longer the avoidance of a man who fears. An iron determination, a spirit of antagonism, had superseded the fear to which he had been prey.

Once more the ball whistled straight toward the plate, only to break sharply inward. It was high and Billy ducked again to hear it called a ball. Three balls and not a strike!

Wilson forgot pitching strategy, he forgot everything save the primitive desire to inflict injury on the dapper young player who smiled at him derisively.

Another one straight at his head, and again Billy ducked. Then the spectators howled their glee.

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"Take y'r base!"

Billy invited a throw from Wilson and beat the ball to the base with ease.

"Where'd yuh learn to play?" he taunted.

Wilson received the throw from Conard in a fury and hurled it back. It went far over the first-sacker's head, and Pitt was on third when the ball was returned to the diamond. The fans went crazy!

Their joy was short lived. Collins popped an easy one to Klaussen on second, and the side was out, with the score still tied.

In the eighth inning Owens reached third, and died there; and in the ninth not a Highlander was given life. Dave Lincoln, first man at bat for the Marines in the final portion of the ninth, went out, third to first. The fans were fidgety, the score was close—the long line of goose eggs on the board foretelling an extra-inning game.

HIGHLANDERS	101 000 000
MARINES	200 000 00

CON O'LEARY stepped to the plate, hit a nasty bounder to Klaussen and beat the relay to first. Again Billy Pitt came to the bat! Spectators begged, pleaded, implored a hit. Any kind of a hit. From first O'Leary signaled daringly for the hit-and-run. The situation was too critical to risk a sacrifice.

Wilson, hating none the less, was sobered. A game on his average meant much, and save for his wildness when Pitt was at the bat, he had twirled a pretty game.

He put the first ball wide of the pan and Kepner slammed it to second, but a trifle too late to catch the fleet O'Leary. A long single now meant a run—and the game!

The next was tempting bait; it dropped sharply over the pan and Pitt fanned a second too late. One ball and one strike.

Wilson determined on a sharp in; it seemed impossible that in a single game a man could have overcome an innate fear. And Billy, clutching his bat tightly, sensed the other's thoughts. An incurve was coming, and Billy Pitt was not afraid!

Carefully he followed every motion of the wind-up. He saw the ball leave Wilson's hand and whiz toward him. Deliberately he slid his right foot back, dug his spike into the ground, shortened his bat and swung!

The ball drove between first and second. The thousands in the park came to frantic life. Pitt ran as he had never done before, and O'Leary raced over the pan with the winning run! Billy's single had landed the Marines in second place!

BILLY had overcome his fear of an incurve; but his heart was filled with misgivings as he turned in the gate of the McCarthy home that night.

They were silent for a long time. Then a soft, white hand snuggled into his calloused one, and a tiny voice said—

"Well, Billy—aren't you going to say—something?"

He said it—and an hour later, with his arm about her waist, they looked over the box-score in the baseball extra.

HIGHLANDERS

	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
Craig, r.f.	4	1	1	0	0	0
Barringer, 3b.	4	0	0	1	2	0
Houston, c.f.	3	0	0	1	0	0
Trenholm, s.s.	4	0	1	0	4	0
Conard, 1b.	4	0	0	10	0	0
Owens, l.f.	3	0	0	1	0	0
Klaussen, 2b.	3	0	0	3	2	0
Kepner, c.	3	1	1	9	1	0
Wilson, p.	3	0	0	0	2	1
	31	2	3	25	11	1

MARINES

	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
O'Leary, l.f.	5	1	2	3	1	0
Pitt, 3b.	2	1	2	2	4	0
Collins, r.f.	4	1	1	1	0	0
Shirley, c.f.	4	0	0	0	1	0
Werner, s.s.	3	0	0	1	5	0
Bell, 1b.	4	0	0	7	1	0
Fremont, 2b	3	0	0	4	2	0
Lincoln, c.	3	0	1	7	2	0
Rohan, p.	2	0	0	2	1	0
	30	3	7	27	16	0

Score by innings:

HIGHLANDERS	101 000 000—2.
MARINES	200 000 001—3.

SUMMARY:—Three-base hit: Collins. Stolen bases: O'Leary, Conard. Sacrifice hits: Fremont, Shirley, Kepner. Double plays: Trenholm to Klaussen to Wilson; Werner to Fremont. Struck out: by Rohan, 9; by Wilson, 5. Hit by pitched ball: Pitt. Bases on balls: off Rohan, 1; off Wilson, 2. Umpire: Duncan. Time of Game: 1.52.

"That batting-average looks pretty good," sighed Billy amorously, "doesn't it?"

"Yes—dear. And I wonder whether Mr. O'Leary will let you carry me once around the circuit for our honeymoon?"

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THE DANCE at ALECK FONTAINE'S

by HENRY OYEN

UP AND down the Flambeau River men said that Angus Guyot laughed first and thought afterward. In a large measure this was true. It was in his blood.

He came of a swart French father whose merriness was proverbial up and down the river. From him Angus had the too ready laugh as well as the ready ear for a tune which made him and his fiddle welcome wherever his vagrant feet strayed. But, also, Angus' mother was half Scotch and half Chippewa, and when this strangely mixed half of him was in the ascendancy Angus Guyot did not laugh—first.

Louis Bovee—"Bad Bovee" as he loved to hear himself called—knew nothing of the traits of guile and tenacity which had been handed down to Guyot from the dark-skinned maternal side of his family tree. This lack of knowledge cost him dear.

He appraised Angus solely from the side of him that laughed so easily. Had he known, it is quite certain that Bad Bovee would have been more thorough in his dealings with Laughing Angus Guyot.

The trouble between Bovee and Angus came about through the latter's penchant for laughing first and thinking afterward. He laughed at Bovee, laughed fully and freely in the bad man's face. Worse still, he did it before a crowd, and— before the woman.

It happened at the big dance given at Camp One to celebrate the first snowfall of the year and the beginning of another logging season. To the dance there came from the far ends of the Flambeau Valley, and even beyond the forbidding walls of Dog-Tooth Ridge, every settler, woodsman, river-driver and hunter who could reach there; and for want of a better escort Adele Fontaine, the black-eyed, lithesome belle of the Valley came in the sleigh of Bad Louis Bovee.

Angus Guyot laid down his fiddle and laughed when he laid eyes on her.

Adele looked upon him. He was good to look upon, was Angus, a fit match for Adele. They danced together twice in succession, while Bad Bovee stood to one side and ground his fine, white teeth, and after that war was inevitable.

"You dare?" breathed Bovee softly into Guyot's ear when the second dance was over.

"Dare what, m'sieu?" asked Angus.

"You dare to put this affront upon me, here before this crowd—upon me, Bad Bovee?"

He showed his teeth, perfect white teeth for which he was famous.

The French half of Angus Guyot being in the ascendancy at the time he laughed. It was not a thoughtful thing to do, for in spite of his melodramatic posing Bad Bovee well deserved his name. Those who knew him knew only too well the answer that now was to be expected, and they drew to one side and left the two alone. Only Adele stood nearby and watched them with half-parted, smiling lips.

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FOR a second or two they stood and measured one another, Bovee and Angus, while the crowd waited for the sudden flash of the bad man's knife. To the surprise of all no such flash came. Bovee's lips curved into a contemptuous, pitying smile, and he stepped over and placed his arm about Adele.

"To your fiddle now, if you please, m'sieu," he said. "You have danced. One always pays when one dances. And now others will dance—while you pay."

The people who knew Bovee shook their heads and felt sorry for Angus. It was a trait of Bad Louis that he did not forget.

Angus Guyot did not worry. In fact, before the evening was over he had all but forgotten the incident. Something of more importance had happened to him during that ball than a mere quarrel with Louis Bovee. It had happened during the second dance with Adele.

"You are coming to play at the dance at my father's house, four weeks from this day?" she had whispered.

"But no; I have heard no such word," whispered Angus. He was surprised. Aleck Fontaine, the richest land-owner and logger in the valley, whose big house lay at the lower end of the valley, had ever held a poor opinion of the careless Angus Guyot.

"Stupid!" chided Adele with a touch of the fingers. "Do you not hear the word now?"

"But your father——?"

"Oh!" A toss of the head and a pout. "Is it my father's wishes that you think of first? Or perhaps—even though I wish it—you will not come because of Louis Bovee?"

"Bovee?" repeated Angus slowly. "He will be there?"

"Of course."

"Then I, too, will be there—of course."

So the next morning when the dance broke up it was not of the threat in Bovee's eyes that Angus was thinking, but of the light that played in the eyes of Adele, and that he would see her and dance with her four weeks from that day at her father's.

"Keep both eyes wide open for Louis Bovee, Angus," cautioned old Father Moise. "He is out on thy trail."

"Oh, sure," said Angus; and he laughed up at the paling morning sky.

That day the logging company, which he served as a first-rate timber-cruiser when such activity did not interfere with his fiddle-playing, sent him away to cruise out a tract that lay far to the northward. Angus strapped his long skis to his feet and carelessly set his face toward the unmarked wilderness where his work was waiting for him.

His trail led up over the bare summit of Dog-Tooth Ridge, the northern boundary of the Flambeau Valley, and on the summit Angus paused and looked back at the valley he was leaving behind. Far away to the southward he made out a series of black specks on the vast snow-carpet that lay beneath him, and his heart beat more rapidly as he recognized them as the buildings of Aleck Fontaine.

"Four weeks from this day I will stand here again," chuckled Angus. "But then my face will be turned the other way—toward the dance at Fontaine's — toward Adele herself."

With a laugh he turned and shot down the northern side of the ridge, toward the Big Timber, and for the next four weeks he disappeared from the ken of men.

Back in the valley his friends were pleased that he had gone. Bad Bovee had not followed. Yet they knew that Angus would return, and that Bad Bovee would not forget.

Angus never thought of Bovee after he had lost himself in the Big Timber.

By day he did his work carefully and well, the Scotch strain which he had through his mother prompting him to move with deliberation and caution when work was in hand. By night he lay down in the snow on his bed of boughs; and in the light of his campfire he pictured eagerly the flashing eyes and red lips of Adele Fontaine. Only one thing troubled him during these lonely days: the four weeks until the dance at Fontaine's were slow in passing.

II

AT THE end of the four weeks Angus Guyot, keen and hard from a month in the timber, turned the curved toes of his skis southward and steadily laid the white miles behind him. Each mile that brought him nearer to the object of his desires raised his spirits correspondingly. Late in the afternoon of the day of the dance, he swung himself once more to the summit of Dog-Tooth Ridge, and, looking down on the Flambeau Valley again saw

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before him the black specks that marked the holdings of Aleck Fontaine.

Angus laughed. A snow-driving wind from the north whipped the top of the ridge with a million scourges, sweeping the ridge to the bare rock-bone, tearing the branches from stunted jack-pines with the crack of pistol-shots, and tugging at Angus as if wishful to drag him headlong with it as it swirled by. Tall, broad-shouldered and lithe-hipped, he stood in the wind, swaying easily on his long skis, and feasting his eyes upon the land of his desire.

He was happy. He had not a worry in the world. For a month he had labored conscientiously and well. Even the grim old Aleck Fontaine would be forced to admit that Angus Guyot could work steadily when he had the right incentive. And now he was coming back—to Adele. She had wished him to come.

The proud, coquettish belle of the Flambeau Valley had smiled upon him and invited him to the dance. No wonder Angus Guyot laughed as he stood upon Dog-Tooth Ridge; no wonder he had forgotten that such a man as Bad Louis Bovee was in existence.

Bad Bovee had not forgotten. When Guyot had disappeared the day after the dance at Camp One, Bovee had made sundry cautious inquiries. Having learned of the mission on which Angus had gone, Bovee smiled. He then knew where to find his man in case he should desire to go after him.

One day Adele, wearying of his enforced attentions, had burst into a fury and told him that when the night of the dance at her father's arrived, she would show him plainly where he stood in her affections.

"For Angus Guyot is to come to the dance," she concluded mockingly. "Twice he danced with me at the dance at the Camp. But when it comes the time to dance at my father's—Ah! M'sieu Bovee, I do not think there will be even one single small dance left for you."

The bad man showed his white teeth in a wolfish grin.

"So that laughing fiddler, Guyot, is to come back to the valley in time for the dance, is he?" he said. "Well, well, my beauty, we shall see what we shall see."

Then he had ascertained by which particular trail Angus Guyot was certain to climb Dog-Tooth Ridge on his way back to the valley; and Bovee had sat down patiently to await the day of his return.

UP ON the bleak summit of the ridge Angus Guyot bent over and carefully fastened the thongs of his skis before setting himself for the flashing slide down the slope into the valley. The wind was rising steadily. A branch broke, with a crack, from a jack-pine and flew humming past his ears.

Angus tightened the belt of his mackinaw another hole, pulled the round cap farther down over his ears, grasped his ski-stick and stood poised for the flight down-hill. As he stood so there came from behind a rock a hundred yards away a crack which was slightly louder than the noise of dry limbs wrenched off by the storm.

A look of great, child-like surprise spread itself over Angus Guyot's face. A second crack spat out from behind the rock.

With a sudden collapse, as if all the strings holding him upright suddenly had been severed, Angus fell forward upon his skis and went tumbling down the hillside, sliding and rolling, skis and man inextricably mixed in a flying whirlwind, until finally they lay, an inert, unshapen lump helpless in the snow in the bottom of the valley.

The wind continued to whip the ridge, and the driven snow fell lightly upon the crumpled figure down below. Up on the ridge for several moments there was no new motion, no new sign of life. Presently from behind the rock whence had come the two cracks there rose up a man who had been lying hidden, prone in the snow. A rifle was in his hands, and as he rose he jerked down the lever and threw a fresh cartridge into the barrel. Crouched and sinister he came forth from the shelter of his hiding-place.

His mouth was open, and beneath the wolf-lift of his upper lip there gleamed a row of perfect white teeth. Slowly, bent half-double, the cocked rifle held forward at the ready, he crept toward the spot where the marks of Angus Guyot's skis showed on the top of the ridge. Slowly and cautiously he reached the spot, and, bending far over, looked down the slope at the still figure lying below.

A spasm of rage shook the man as he looked, and the rifle flew to the crouched shoulder. With the swiftness of the practised rifleman he lined up the sights on his victim and waited for a passing whirl of

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snow to blow past before pulling the trigger.

Angus Guyot lay very still. One long ski was stuck upright in the snow, holding the leg clear of the ground; the other lay far to one side. His head was half-buried in the snow, the face downward. It was obvious that he could not be alive.

All this the man on the top of the ridge saw as he placed his sights on Guyot's body. He did not pull the trigger. He saw that there was no need for a third shot.

The man took the rifle from his shoulder. For a long time he stood watching for any sign of movement in the crumpled lump below. None came. Slowly, without turning his eyes, the man let down the hammer of his rifle. A while longer he stood peering down. Then, still crouched, he slunk back toward his hiding-place and vanished from sight of the ridge.

The wind continued to whip the snow and small drifts began to pile up about the body in the valley.

III

IT WAS some seconds after the man with the rifle had withdrawn himself from the top of the ridge that Angus Guyot heaved a great sigh, spat out a mouthful of snow, and wondered what had happened. Presently he sought to open his eyes. He felt the lids pressed tightly against something cold and wet. He gulped. The cold, wet stuff filled his mouth and nostrils.

Angus realized that he was lying face downward in the snow, and with the sudden terror that might come to a man who feels that he is buried alive, he heaved his head free, gasped hungrily at the blessed, lung-filling air, and looked around.

At first he could not understand. It was something like a dream.

He remembered that he had been standing, straight and able, on the top of the ridge a few seconds before. The thing came back minutely. He recalled how he had been looking down into the valley, how he had thrilled at the thought of Adele who awaited him at Fontaine's dance. The wind had been whistling viciously, the dry branches were flying past; and he had laughed.

He remembered that he had stopped to tighten the ski-thongs about his ankles. After that—what? Ah, yes; he had straightened up. He had balanced his stick in his hands, and then—then nothing.

Slowly, painfully Guyot's numbed mind fumbled for a faithful memory of that last moment of consciousness — he had been standing up straight, he had bent forward, he was about to launch himself down the slope, and then—then with a groan it all came back to him. A sharp crack from behind, a sudden, burning sting in the left shoulder. Another crack, and then that awful fraction of a second when it had leaped through his mind that he was being shot at from behind, and when, with the wild-animal instinct of the natural woodsman, he had hurled himself desperately forward, falling, tumbling, rolling, any way to get out of range, to find cover from the leaden death that had whinnied past him.

The buck which, with the hair lifted off its withers by a hunter's bullet, leaps blindly into a stream and allows itself to be carried along, submerged, by the current, acts from much the same instinct that prompted Angus Guyot to hurl himself heedlessly down the jagged-rocked side of Dog-Tooth Ridge. The frightful tumble, ending with a solid thump at the bottom, had knocked the senses out of him.

He was not shamming when he lay like one dead while the man with the rifle looked over the sights and sought for an excuse to shoot again. Now he was coming back to his senses, and weakly he wondered how it happened that he was still alive.

For many seconds he made no effort to stir. It was good enough just to be alive, to gulp eagerly at the revivifying air, to feel the blood stirring again in his veins. His first movement was to turn his head slowly and look up toward the top of the Ridge.

A sigh of relief came from him as he saw that the summit was bare, for he had feared and expected to see above him the man who had so deliberately shot him down. With a heave and a groan he rolled over on his back and lay for a moment panting and staring straight up at the snow-filled sky while he tried to think.

He became conscious that he was very thirsty. Turning his head he bit hungrily into the snow in which he lay. The cold stuff chilled his fevered tongue. It cooled his throat as he swallowed, and he turned farther and buried his forehead in snow, holding it so until the temples had ceased throbbing and his senses had cleared.

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Then he became aware of something warm and wet on the skin of his left breast. He wondered curiously what it could be. The rest of him was cold, but that particular spot was warm. The spot seemed to be spreading. Something was running down his breast.

Suddenly Angus remembered the sting in his shoulder at the first shot up on the hilltop, and with a curse he sat up and tore off his mackinaw. Sitting there in the snow he managed to bare his left shoulder, and by craning his neck took stock of his wound. And when he saw it, a sudden revulsion of feeling drove the dread from his heart, and he actually laughed.

The bullet had gone through the thick shoulder muscles a scant inch to one side of the neck. Where it had entered was a tiny, puckered hole the diameter of a thin pencil; where it had come out was a ragged opening from which the blood was streaming freely.

"Thirty-thirty, soft-nosed bullet," mused Angus expertly. "If she had gone one inch farther in—but she didn't."

He laughed hysterically; he was not killed; he was going to live!

He scooped up a handful of snow and thrust it hard against the open mouth of the bleeding wound. He held it there until it had melted, running red between his fingers, then scooped another handful and repeated the operation. Ten times he put fresh snow on the wound, and then the bleeding had stopped.

Next, he tore his handkerchief into strips, and, with teeth and fingers, managed to place a bandage under his armpit and around his neck so that it pressed tightly against the wound and kept it closed. This being done he buttoned his shirt, resumed his mackinaw, and without rising began to think the affair over.

And now Angus Guyot did not laugh.

It was Bovee, of course. Angus remembered now the threat that had lurked in the bad man's eyes when they had parted at the dance at Camp One, and he cursed himself for a careless fool for the manner in which he had returned to the valley. Had he stopped to think he could not have failed to know that Bad Louis would be waiting for his return.

As an experienced man Angus realized now that he should have come back cautiously, changing his trail, keeping under cover, careful not to give Bovee the opportunity for which he waited. Instead, he had come back like a boy of twenty, following well-known trails, traveling openly in the light of day, never so much as thinking of a possible ambush. And Louis Bovee had reasoned that it would be so. He had judged rightly the careless side of Angus Guyot's character, and had taken advantage thereof.

A hot wave of humiliation swept over the wounded man as he realized how amateurish had been his conduct in this affair. It was all due to the lightness with which he received events—to his inclination to laugh first and think afterward. It was due to no virtue on his part that Bad Louis Bovee had not triumphed over him as he had planned. Fool's luck! Bad Louis usually did much better shooting.

Guyot ground his teeth at the thought of his own shame. He drew his feet under him and sat cross-legged, staring straight before him with unseeing eyes. The mixed blood of his mother was in the ascendancy now; the dark guile of the Chippewa, and the grimness of the Scot were conspiring gloomily for revenge upon Bad Louis Bovee.

IV

MINUTE after minute Angus sat cross-legged in the snow without moving, without shifting his unseeing stare before him. He was Indian enough to be quite insensible to petty things like a stiffening wound and a chilled body while the desire for revenge obsessed him.

Presently a gleam of light flickered in the steady, staring eyes. A white man smiles or swears when a pleasant idea comes to him. Angus merely half-closed his eyes to hide the gleam that had come into them. Without rising he reached into an inside pocket in his mackinaw and drew forth tobacco and papers. Carefully and deliberately he rolled a cigaret; carefully and deliberately he lighted it.

It was only when the first long puff, drawn deep into the lungs, was shot in a cloud through the nostrils that Angus treated himself to a pleased and amused—"Ha!"

He rose stiffly, favoring his left shoulder, and examined his skis. A grunt of satisfaction indicated that his luck still held; the long, thin skis had remained unbroken in the terrific tumble down-hill, and slipping

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his feet in the thongs Angus began expertly to zig-zag his way up the slope, back to the top of the Ridge where the shooting had occurred.

He knew that Bovee, experienced in such matters, would hurry away from the scene before a chance passerby might see him and connect him with the crime, so he went up boldly and looked the ground over. He grunted appreciatively as he saw where Bovee had stooped to pick the empty shells from the snow.

Bovee was not the man to let traces of his handiwork lie loosely about. He saw where Bovee had lain in hiding behind the rock; where he had stood and peered down into the valley after the shooting; and finally where the ski-tracks indicated that he had fled from the scene with the greatest rapidity.

Angus followed the tracks only far enough to assure himself that the detour that Bovee was making led always southward—toward Aleck Fontaine's. Then he once more topped the ridge and, despite his stiffening shoulder, he rode the slope at breakneck speed down into the Flambeau Valley.

OLD Father Moise was preparing his evening meal in his snug little shack on the banks of the Flambeau, a mile above the place of Aleck Fontaine, when Angus Guyot came slipping silently up to his door. Besides possessing uncanny skill in the administration of "Indian medicine" and in dressing wounds, the old half-breed, because of the benevolence and honestness of his character, occupied a position in many respects second only to that of Father Noel of the parish.

Angus Guyot knocked cautiously at the door of the shack.

"Come in," called Moise, for his was an open house to all that passed by.

"You are alone?" came a hoarse, disguised voice.

"All alone."

Swiftly Angus opened the door and slipped inside, bolting the door after him. It was no part of his program that any outsider should see him in the flesh.

"My son, what is this?"

Old Moise peered sharply from under his white brows as he stood with a frying-pan in hand.

"Angus Guyot, the merry lad, comes slinking into his friend's house with a look back over the shoulder? Eh, my son; something has happened?"

For reply Angus stripped off his mackinaw, opened his shirt and tore away the red bandage about his shoulder.

"Eh!" cried Moise. "That is the work of Bovee?"

He placed the frying-pan on the stove and set to work. The wound had broken out afresh during Guyot's run down the valley, and the old man stanched it cunningly. As he worked Angus talked. Old Moise grunted as he heard the tale.

"But what did you expect, my son?" he demanded. "This Louis Bovee, you know of him. After a man has laughed in the face of such a one it is time to beware when he smiles. Did I not say to keep both eyes open that night of the dance? Eh! And it seems, my son, that once more you have laughed first and thought afterward."

"Yes," agreed Angus, "and I have thought much."

Old Moise was pleased. This was "Indian talk."

"I have thought of the dance which is to be held at Aleck Fontaine's this night," continued Angus, "to which Louis Bovee is going, and to which I, also, was going before Louis 'took my life.'"

And then, while the old half-breed was binding up his wound, Angus Guyot, in Indian-talk, told of the pleasant idea that had come to him as he sat in the snow back at the foot of Dog-Tooth Ridge.

"I am a dead man, you see, Père Moise," he concluded. "Louis Bovee knows that. He saw me die. But should a grand ball be saddened for a little thing like that? Ah, no! It will be a merry dance, a dance to be talked of up and down the River for years —the dance this night at Aleck Fontaine's! It will be Louis Bovee's last. Because Bovee knows for sure that I lie dead in the snow below Dog-Tooth Ridge."

It was hard for Old Moise to suppress a look of admiration as he listened to Guyot's plan. But for the time being they were two Indians together, and anything so effeminate as a change of expression was tabooed.

The old man grunted his acquiescence as he heard the part that Angus wished him to play in the night's affair. Having finished dressing the bullet-bored shoulder, and having given Angus a strengthening draft, he resumed his cookery.

When the meal was prepared they sat up

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and ate in silence. The meal over the old man rose, threw on mackinaw and cap and took an old pair of snow-shoes from the wall.

"Now I go," said he, as he stepped out of the shack and turned his face down the river toward Aleck Fontaine's.

Angus Guyot did not even look up as his old friend departed. He was busily rolling a cigaret. When the cigaret was lighted he blew out the lamp and sat in the darkness, stoically smoking and waiting.

V

THE scene at the big log house of Aleck Fontaine, as old Moise made his approach, was one to warm the heart of the coldest. From every window the lights gleamed out their hearty welcome.

About the place there was the sound of merry voices, of the unhooking of harnesses, of snatches of song from the young people, impatient for the evening's pleasure to begin. The whole valley was there, from the oldest *grand-père* who could hobble to the latest babe, borne in its mother's arms.

Fat, red-cheeked Aleck Fontaine stood at the doorway to bid his guests a hearty welcome, the bedecked and flushed Adele at his side. Adele, it was true, was a trifle troubled. All day she had looked forward to the arrival of Angus Guyot who was to play at the dance.

Now it was the evening, only a short time before the dancing was to begin, and still no Angus had appeared; no word from him had been received. Father Fontaine failed to share in the least his daughter's surprise and disappointment.

"That foolish, thoughtless Angus Guyot!" he laughed as Adele voiced her fear that something must have happened. "Didst thou ever know that he was to be depended upon, my daughter? Eh! No more than the wind. One moment he is here, the next he is gone; and he laughs and forgets so easily—too easily to suit me."

With a curt nod he turned to welcome Louis Bovee. Adele bit her lip as she saw the bad man smiling at her. Bovee had been drinking, she saw that readily. Nothing else could have made his eyes sparkle so with pleasure.

"It seems that you are not entirely happy, Adele?" he murmured with a smile. "Something is missing? No?"

He looked around the big room in which the dance was to be held, pretending to search.

"No," he continued, "there is nobody of consequence in the valley who is not here."

With a laugh he swaggered away to flirt with some of the younger girls to whom his ugly reputation had made him a romantic figure. Father Fontaine chuckled as he saw his daughter's cheeks redden with humiliation and anger.

"Ah, little daughter, you are thinking the same as I," he said teasingly. "You are thinking, as I think, that Angus Guyot is not here because he is afraid of Louis Bovee. Ah, Father Moise!" he cried eagerly, espying the old man. "Come my old friend; the snow is chill to old blood and a drop of the white whisky is good for us old ones, but for us alone. Come, there are other old friends who await you, Moise."

"And it is with you, Fontaine, and such other old friends that I will speak a word," said the old man softly.

"Eh?" Fontaine cocked his ears and looked at Moise shrewdly. "Something is in the wind, Father Moise?"

"Something is in the wind," agreed the half-breed, following Fontaine into a small room to one side where a number of old men already were gathered around a table with a bottle and cards.

There, with their heads close together and sworn to secrecy, the old cronies heard of what had happened to young Angus Guyot and of the idea that the young man had evolved. To a man they hated and feared Bad Louis Bovee, and when they had heard they readily joined the conspiracy.

While this was going on Bovee was strutting and swaggering about the dance-floor and asking loudly for word of Angus Guyot.

"He was to be here, was he not?" he asked. "He was to play at this dance. Where is he, then? Has any one heard? Could it be that he stays away because of what happened at Camp One?"

At this Adele measured him with a look of scorn.

"Do you think Angus stays away for fear of you?" she demanded. "You make me laugh, Bovee. Never fear; Angus will be here. But it is strange he has not sent word."

"Strange!" laughed Bovee. "Ho, ho, ho! Yes, truly, it is strange that Angus has not sent word!"

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As a clamor arose among the young people for the dance to begin, Aleck Fontaine came forward and took Bovee flatteringly by the arm, leading him to the room where sat the old men with the bottle.

"Let the children dance first, Louis Bovee," said the host with a wink. "For strong men like us, there is a drink to be taken before we begin to make merry."

AS THEY entered the little room, closing the door behind them, they saw the circle of old men bent eagerly forward to listen to old Moise.

"Is it true, then?" demanded one of the old men.

"Yes, yes," said the others. "It is a known thing. And have you not just heard Father Moise tell how it happened to his uncle."

"What is this, what is this that happened to thy uncle, Father Moise?" cried Fontaine bustlingly. "Sit thee down, Louis. Here is the drink. Continue, Father Moise; we interrupt."

"It was only what is well known among us old ones, friend Fontaine," replied Moise deprecatingly. "You know—we all know, who are old—that the soul of a strong man who happens to be slain by one who is weaker will not let the slain man's body rest—that the strong soul drives the dead clay to its feet and forces it to take the trail of its slayer."

"Oh, that," said Fontaine with a careless shrug of the shoulders. "Of course that is a known thing. You do not drink, Louis? Eh, *bien*. Drink 'er down—as for what thou sayest, Father Moise, I myself have known—but how was it with thy uncle?"

"My uncle," resumed Moise mildly, "was a strong, honest man who was slain from behind by a coward who feared to meet him face to face. With a rifle the coward was able to slay my uncle's body, but the soul he could not overcome, for my uncle was the superior man. Thus, though he was dead as to body, my uncle's soul lifted him to his feet. It could not rest until it had feasted upon the soul of the coward—do you hear, my friends? It could have no peace until it had made the cowardly murderer's soul its own——"

"You do not drink, Louis," said Fontaine in the silence that followed. "Eh! That is right. Drink another, too."

"And so," continued Moise, "my dead uncle's body—though it was dead—took the trail of its slayer. There were so many who saw that it is well known among us old ones. It found him—for the coward was so fearful he could not run——"

"And—then—then?"

Father Moise shrugged his shoulders.

"No man may say," he concluded softly. "But it is a well-known thing—my uncle's hands reached out and fell upon his slayer, and with a great cry of despair the slayer went with him, and they disappeared, then and there from the eyes of all men forever——"

"Eh! Louis!" cried Fontaine suddenly, with a look at Bovee's blanched face. "You—you are not ill, eh?"

WITH a curse Bovee staggered to his feet. Behind him the door opened and closed noiselessly. The black depths of Bovee's French-Canadian superstition, which is a thing inbred, had been stirred to the bottom. The soft, solemn voice of old Moise sounded upon his ears like the voice of doom. He did not merely believe that what the old man had said was true—he knew it!

"*Mon Dieu!*" he muttered. "Why do you tell this to me—to me? Why does not the dance begin? Why?"

He turned suddenly and saw standing against the wall—as if he had come through the wall—Angus Guyot, who, he knew, lay dead in the snow at the foot of Dog Tooth Ridge! And he knew in his heart, as he had known since they measured eyes at Camp One, that Guyot was the stronger man, and that now his soul had driven his body to come and feast upon the soul of Bad Louis Bovee!

With a scream the bad man reached for the big whisky bottle for a weapon, but the iron fingers of old Moise were around the bottle and held it fixed to the table.

"What is it, Louis?" asked the old man gently. "What do you see?"

Angus Guyot took a slow step forward. Bovee, helpless, open-mouthed, wide-eyed retreated to the door. Angus followed slowly. Into the ballroom the bad man stumbled backward, his eyes held by the Thing he saw before him.

"Speak!" gasped Bovee, clutching his dry throat. "Speak to me, Angus!"

Angus slowly reached out his hands like two claws, stretching forth to clutch a

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victim. Then, agreed all present who did not know what had taken place in the little room, Bad Louis Bovee went mad. Else why should he scream so strangely, and with his hands held over his eyes, run wildly out of the room into the snowstorm which now was raging? Surely it was not the thing for a man in his right senses to do.

Outside, Bovee stopped neither for snowshoes nor skis. He plunged away into the night, leaping through the snow without looking whither he went. He was a strong runner, the strongest in the valley. No one could catch him, not even that Thing.

Near the river Bovee turned around. Once more he screamed. The Thing was at his shoulder; it moved slowly yet it kept his pace. Without hope now, driven only by terror, Bad Louis ran on.

At the brink of the Flambeau he paused again, cowering and looking back. But the Thing was still with him—it was reaching out again. With a ghastly cry of despair Bovee leaped far out into the ice-filled waters of the river.

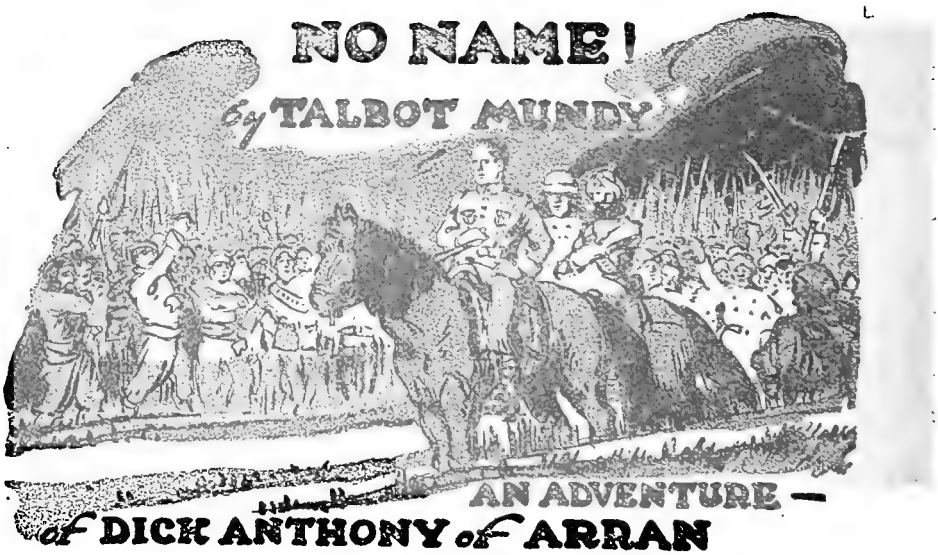
Angus Guyot, who had stopped and put on his skis before pursuing Bovee from Fontaine's, stood quietly on the bank and watched him struggle. It would have been useless to attempt to help, had Angus been so inclined—which, being bred as he was, he was not.

Presently all that could be seen in the river were the bobbing pieces of white ice and the rushing black water. Then Angus turned and went back to the dance at Aleck Fontaine's.

"And Louis Bovee?" asked Adele as they danced together.

"Has gone away," said Angus. "He will not come back."

And Aleck Fontaine, who was watching from a corner, noted with approval that Angus did not laugh.



OUT RAINED, as the high-piled Elburz Mountains understand it, straight up and down. The earth drummed to it. Pools in the rock hollows seethed and boiled. A vapor rose six feet or so to meet the downpour—to be mushroomed, swallowed, and beaten down again. Trees, clean green, drooped under the weight of water, and man-high grass lay flattened so that the rocks rose bald and wet between. Growing treacherous where the cracks had been, the warm earth glistened between new strips of green; and through it all a thousand brooks boiled noisily between the rocks, galloping and thundering to the plains and the Caspian, thousands of feet below.

Like shadows in the wet mist, nearly noiseless because of the myriad other sounds, two Afghans pressed their horses forward uphill at a wheezy jog-trot, dispirited and fagged out, horse and man.

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The horses were plains-bred, evidently out of Turkestan and no friends of mountains; nor did it need genius to guess how their riders longed for the cold dry winds of Kabul. One man rolled a little in the saddle; there was a blood-soaked bandage on his neck.

Two hundred yards behind them rode another man, red-headed this one, six feet five in his socks, built bull-wise, broad in the beam, heavy of neck and hip and thigh. He too rolled in the saddle, but not from weakness, for he looked as if he could have crushed the tired horse between his legs. Face, manner, seat in the saddle betrayed him no horseman; his big, broad feet crammed ankle-deep into the stirrups seemed better suited to the earth, or to be set against a squeaking thwart while his iron arms labored at an oar. He seemed to guide his horse with rudder-lines, and the drumming rain neither worried him nor made him ache.

Two hundred yards again behind this giant, invisible to him or the Afghans through the downpour, but audible to them when his charger's hoofs sucked out of mud or clattered on the wet rock, there rode yet another man with red hair—bareheaded and with no more dejection about him than the dawn wears when it bursts red-angry through a bank of cloud.

This last man halted every now and then, and waited to listen for pursuit. They would have been ten brave men who dared pick him for their quarry then, for, from horse that was fresh in spite of climbing, to sword that shook loose in the scabbard and automatic pistols that were dry but ready in unbuttoned holsters, he looked like the danger-god himself. He smiled as he rode and listened, and there was sadness as well as humor at the corners of his mouth and eyes; it was a smile of the rare type that carries consternation to its owner's enemies as well as confidence to all his friends.

Over and again he stopped to listen, but there was no sound of pursuit. A jog-trot, long kept up by horses used to it, is a pace that will make even a mountain trail reel out, and brings clouds down and ever downward until they hang draped around the climbers.

Pursuing horsemen, had there been any, must have been coming fast, and their din would have been audible through that of the elements.

NOW and then, when broader streams were reached, and the Afghans hesitated on the bank to toss in stones and judge the depth of water from the splash, he would catch up. Then backs would stiffen. Then, besides the difference that race and creed had made between the two Afghans and the Scotsman, another, subtler, absoluter difference would show itself, that had neither race nor creed in it. Dick Anthony of Arran was a leader. The other three, Scotsman and Afghan alike, were merely, though entirely, men.

Dick's character showed best when such difficulties intervened. Without a word, and with no fuss or swagger, he would plunge ahead into the stream, leading his horse or riding as seemed best, and, without "babying" his men or seeming to underrate their nerve, never forgetting that he showed the way as well as found one for himself.

Once, where a more than usually savage stream boiled by them and defied all daring, he cut down a fifty-foot-high nine-inch sapling with his sword so that it fell across from bank to bank. Then, when he had shifted it so that the far end lay wedged tight between two rocks and the near end was against a tree trunk, he showed them how a man of spunk could cling to it and hold both himself and horse upstream while struggling hand-over-hand across. And, since he stood then on the far bank, and they loved him, they showed that they had spunk. The big Scotsman proved he had enough for two, for he came back twice—once for the wounded Afghan, once for the Afghan's horse.

They rode in the same order, until at last the air grew less saturated and the pine trees were more frequent. Seven thousand feet above sea-level Dick was near his own now, and pursuit would have been serious business for any less than a brigade or two. There was no need any more to guard the rear; he had reached an altitude where he was king. He rode alone, ahead then, with Andry Macdougal laboring behind him and the Afghans last.

"How-ut!" came a challenge from the summit of an overhanging crag.

"Friend!" called Dick in a voice that hit the crag and came echoing back from it.

"*Salaam, Dee-k-Anthonee bahadur!*"

There was no pause, nor any silence after that. Crag after crag, skyline after skyline barked the news, until a far-off aerie, perch-

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ed in what once had been a crater, caught it and exulted. Soon a guard of honor, fifty strong, of men who would have thought it meanness to be more than civil to an ordinary man, swooped down a gully glade and brought their horses to a thundering halt in front of him. Fifty sabers swept out of the scabbards and whistled to an emperor's salute, and a graybeard in command gave tongue for all of them.

"*Salaam aleikoum, Anthonee bahadur!*"

"*Salaam aleikoum!*" answered Dick.

No other word was spoken. The graybeard flung an arm up and the fifty wheeled. Now Dick rode between two twenty-four-man columns, preceded by the escort's officer; and when the glade grew narrow near the top Andry was squeezed out to the rear and rode there, muttering to himself about the "domned impudence o' black men."

IN AN hour they reached a stream that boiled and gurgled through a gap by which the trail entered Dick's headquarters. There was none other like it in the world. No other mountains than the Elburz hold any such amphitheater, fringed and draped by such giant trees. No other crater has a level floor on which fifty thousand men could drill, yet to the outer rim of which one strong man's voice will carry while the fifty thousand march. No other crater ever gave forth quite such energy as waited pent up now to burst from the Elburz and strike at tyranny, behind Dick Anthony.

The gap wound around beside the stream, until it narrowed to twenty feet, and stream and track filled up the whole of it. There on a big horse sat a black-bearded Afghan, staring ahead of him with an eye that claimed authority.

"*Salaam, bahadur!*" he said, saluting.

"*Salaam,* Usbeg Ali Khan!" said Dick, returning the salute.

"I have kept my trust!"

"I never doubted it!"

"Is all well, *bahadur?*"

"No," said Dick.

"All is well here!"

"Excellent!" said Dick.

"Is it peace or war, *bahadur?*"

"War!" said Dick.

The Afghan's eyes blazed, for he was a man of war, born in the babel of it. War-songs had been his lullabies when his mother cradled him in Kabul.

He wheeled his horse, and led at a trot into the huge amphitheater. And now Dick's eyes blazed in turn, as any leader's must whose command waits ready for him, better and more numerous than he had dared to hope, and greets him with a braver shout than ever greeted Cæsar. Cæsar's men were men who must, or mercenaries. These men were free, and their pay was to be Persia's freedom.

"*Zindabad Dee-k-Anthonee Shah!*" they roared, and the tree-draped crater-sides took up the yell, to send it crashing heavenward.

"They have come in droves, *bahadur!*" explained Usbeg Ali Khan in a voice that rang pridefully. "Many have been drilled in one force or another. There are Turkomans, and Afghans, besides Persians. We have gunners enough! There are nine men here from Samarkand, who fought against Russia and were later drilled in the Russian artillery. And I have kept faith! I have obeyed! By the blood of God, I have made them sweat blood! I have drilled them until the mountains shook, and they fell asleep all standing!"

USBEG ALI KHAN and Dick rode side by side down a living lane of men, who breathed in silence for fear of missing the first word Dick might utter.

"How many are they?"

"Eight thousand, sahib, all but eight."

"Are they sworn in?"

"Partly, sahib."

"How partly?"

"They have sworn to swear! They await the privilege. The veterans will swear anew."

"Very well," said Dick quietly, riding to the exact center of the amphitheater. The swish of his charger's tail could be heard by the last man of the farthest company, so tense was the silence. Through a gap between tall trees on the cleft ring summit of the amphitheater the dying sun glared angry crimson, lighting his red head until his hair seemed fire. The jewel in the hilt of his strange old-fashioned claymore blazed and flashed.

"Persians!" he shouted, seeming to face three ways at once. The silence multiplied itself, so that his voice was lonely as a star in outer space, and as distinct. "The whole world is at war! Faranghistan is rent apart!

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Germany and Austria are at the throats of England, France, and Russia! Now, then, is Persia's opportunity!"

He paused for the information to sink in. There came a little gasp from the serried ranks that was checked instantly. Usbeg Ali Khan, sitting his charger behind Dick to the right, grew rigid and betrayed a line of milk-white teeth between his black beard and mustache. But there was no spoken comment. The tales that had gone abroad about Dick Anthony had been too many, and amazing, for these fatalists to doubt a new tale now or show surprise. The men who had already fought behind him knew him far too well to doubt him ever. The gasp meant interest. The succeeding silence meant respect.

"A little while ago I was a British officer. I rode to ask British recognition of your cause. I have been refused. They say Dick Anthony is dead, and that I am an impostor. I am free, then—as the dead are free—to serve a new cause and a new covenant. Ye asked me to be leader. Some of you have fought behind me. Now, new men as well as old, think deep and choose again, for after this there shall be no more choosing!"

He drew his claymore, and it shone in the sunset like a flame. There came a clatter and a little murmur from the ranks, as each man made his weapon ready and apostrophised his God.

"Our cause is Persia's, not our own. Our lives are our own to give!"

There were idealists among that eight thousand men who may have understood him. The stupidest, loot-hungriest among them knew that he spoke of something loftier than their dreams had ever hinted at.

"Those who are afraid to follow me—or who do not care to follow me—may go!"

There was no movement anywhere—no answering noise.

"Now," said Dick, waving with his sword, "ye have my leave to go!"

ABOUT eight thousand men drew breath together in a sea of sound. The sun went down and darkness shut on them with Eastern mountain suddenness. Then Usbeg Ali shouted and at once a hundred lanterns flickered. At another shout there were fifty flaring torches brought, and Dick sat his horse in the midst of them, looking more than ever like the spirit of Red Danger. The torchlight danced on the watching eyes of thousands.

"Nay! There are some among you—must be men among you—who have no stomach for this business! Who sets his own life above Persia's freedom? Speak!"

A score swaggered forward from the ranks out into the torchlight, Tekke Turkomans, each with a horse's rein across his arm. Their fathers and their grandfathers had terrorized the Persian border; their brothers' and their cousins' heads had graced Persian city gates; their lips curled with the pride of men whose greatest shame is peace.

"What care we Turkomans for Persia?" asked their leader, not with insolence but with the air of one who wants to know. "We heard of Dee-k-Anthonee. We came. We see. Lead on!"

It swept over Dick's mind in that moment that the loyalest man to Persia in all that host was himself, who owed Persia nothing. Even his veterans who had fought behind him for the sake of Persia, and had been in outlawry among the mountains when he came and found them, were men who were at war for private grievance and private enmity. He was sure that half the men would swear, if asked, that they loved Persia better than themselves; but he knew that the truth was that they hated Russia. They were there for revenge, and for the plunder.

And Dick was a real leader. It was no part of his policy to swim with a stream and claim the credit. To his view Persia needed rescuing from Russia, and these men stood ready to his hand, ready to follow him for one cause, and that a wrong one. He dared lead them for another. And he knew himself man enough to make them see the truth of it before the end.

"My sword is Persia's," he said quietly, looking at the smug face and beady eyes of the Turkoman as though he read what lay beneath. "Who follows me fights in the same cause!"

"Lead on!" said the Turkoman.

Dick understood the Eastern mind better than many men with fifty times his experience of it, but he had not guessed a tenth of the effect of Usbeg Ali's tales. He did not realize that these men believed him Alexander of Macedon reincarnated. The sword that had been given to his ancestor by Alexander, King of Scotland, they believed to have been the Great Alexander's; and they

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were ready now to follow the man, and not the cause, just as Alexander the Great's men had been ready.

"Are there any other men who follow me, and care not whither?" Dick demanded. "Let them step two paces from the ranks!"

"Forward—march!" roared Usbeg Ali; and before Dick could turn his head the whole force, nearly eight thousand strong, had thundered two steps forward!

"*Zindabad!*" they yelled. "*Zindabad Dee-k-Anthonee!*"

THEN Dick had an inspiration. If their loyalty was personal to him he had better make it more so! If their imagination had been kindled by imaginary tales about his ancestry, he would fan the flame with a true tale. If he served Persia, and they served him, so Persia would be better served than by a horde whose counsels were divided or whose leader meant no more to them than some mere figurehead.

"Listen!" he thundered, and a silence fell as if his sword had severed the string that held it. "Ye would follow whom? Me? Who am I? What is my name?"

"Dee-k-Anthonee!" they shouted; and his sword went up again amid the torch-smoke until the amphitheater grew still as the heart of night.

"Dick Anthony is dead!" he told them. "I am a dead man by the letter of the English law!"

They gasped. This was a new phase of him, that appealed more than all the rest. By creed, in name, they were Mohammedans; in fact they were superstitious to a man and to the last absurdest stage of it.

"Russia robbed me of my name. I ride to win it back. I now have no name. Ye must follow *No Name!* Russia shall give me back my name; and in return, as payment, I will win you Persia's freedom! Who agrees?"

"Allah!" The word was a gasp of astonishment and acquiescence.

"I asked you who agrees?"

He had touched the right chord unerringly, only he had gone a little shade too fast for their thoughts to follow. Persia, whose modern history so saddened Dick, was much too materially real to them—too commonplace and crude—to be able to stir up their enthusiasm. They knew only that Persian soil had grown uncomfortable, but that Russian would be worse. They were weary of Persia, and of her name; there seemed to them nothing picturesque or even respectable about either. But they believed this man come from the dead to lead them.

Suddenly, as their thoughts caught up with his, they hove their weapons high in air and thundered an ovation to Dick Anthony, the man, that went crashing skyward multiplied by half a million echoes. He sat his horse dead still between the torches, waiting for the tumult to die down, and bitting with an iron will the human inclination to be foolish and exult. In that dangerous moment of personal triumph his humility came to the rescue, and when the roar hoarsened—rose to a climax—fell away and died—his voice was calm, his words reasoned out and clear.

"Then—at present—Russia is the enemy," he said slowly, "and your captain is—*No Name!* Hear me first! I swear to lead you as I would be led myself, without fear or favor. I swear to turn aside for nothing until the end is gained!"

They heard him in silence, and when he paused, their breathing seemed like the voice of an unseen sea; the torches threw dancing shadows that were waves of darkness; the answering glint on human eyes and on the weapons might be foam.

"Now, swear ye!" Dick ordered.

At the word Usbeg Ali spurred his horse, and brought him to a plunging halt again in front of Dick, facing him.

In the West, and given opportunity, Usbeg Ali Khan could have developed into a magnificent stage manager or an impresario. He had staged this act. He had every detail of it ready. He had known, though not what Dick would say, at least how Dick would say it, and he had the answer to Dick's speech all ready. He had drummed and drilled the answer into them, and now eight thousand men raised up their weapons at a sign from him and thundered:

"We obey! In the name of Allah, we obey!"

"Dismiss them!" ordered Dick. "That will do. Andry! Where's Andry?"

There was no answer, and Dick frowned for he had grown used to a giant who was more patient and useful than the general run of shadows.

Then memory came, and he smiled. A moment later he rode off into the gloom, to where he knew the wounded lay and women tended them.

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UNDER a tree whose age, if size means anything, went back to the Beginning—black like a shadow, though unshadowlike, giving the impression of terrific strength—the big man stood still, whispering. His attitude—bowed head, arms held out in front of him that evidently circled somebody or something else—was more expressive than a sermon-length of words; and there was an air of peace and happiness, almost of religion, that neither darkness nor the clatter of an armed camp could conceal. The first words that Dick recognized were French, and the voice was French, not Andry's.

"Do you remember—what I taught you —*J'aime, tu aime, il aime?*"

"Aye, aye. I mind. But I ken ma ain speech best. I love ye!"

There was a little scream, checked suddenly from lack of breath. Dick sat his horse as still as night.

"You cur-r-r-rush like a bear!" a woman panted.

"Na—na!"

"But you do! You did!"

"I wouldna hur-r-rt ye for a' the wor-r-rld!"

Dick rode away unnoticed. He could do without Andry for the moment; Usbeg Ali Khan was the man to see, and there were fifty or a hundred things he had to ask him. The captured Russian tent, in which Usbeg Ali made his temporary home, was pitched on a mound from which nearly the whole encampment could be overlooked, and he guided his horse instinctively toward it.

He halted before he reached the tent, for it seemed he had interrupted another conversation. All the light came from a campfire before the tent. Between it and the tent sat Usbeg Ali Khan, with his saber still strapped on but with his military boots pulled off and his feet stretched out toward the flame. Beside him, one on either hand, stood the two Afghans who had ridden home with Dick, one of whom had a bloody bandage on his neck.

"So she — the Princess — waylaid you!" snarled Usbeg Ali. "*Bismillah!* That woman's soul is made of hell-fire! Her men put you two out of action, and he and that giant of his turned the tide again, killing all the Russians, eh? He had her at his mercy, had he? That must make the dozenth time! And—he showed her mercy?"

"Aye!" said the Afghan with the bandage.

"Nay!" vowed the other one. "He showed her none. As I lay, I heard her beg him take her with him; I heard her sob because he left her there alone. She loves him, and he despises her; if that is mercy and not hell for her, I have neither eyes nor ears nor understanding!"

"Allah give *him* all three!" swore Usbeg Ali. "Why did the addle-pate not kill her when he could? Her maid is with us, and that giant is so in love with the maid that he thinks her shoe-lace good to eat! The maid knows more secrets of the Princess' than I know of my own, and as long as she lives the Princess *must* scheme to get the maid back, or else kill her! And may Allah pull my beard out hair by hair if the maid isn't talking treason to the Persian women, and the women to the wounded, and the wounded to the whole ones! Mark me! Women will be the end of this adventure! as a woman was the beginning of it! So, Ye have my leave to go!"

"*Salaam, bahadur!*" said the two, retiring.

"*Salaam!*" said Usbeg Ali.

"Find a man for me to take my horse," commanded Dick, coming forward to the fire, and Usbeg Ali started like a man shot. "Never mind your boots, Usbeg Ali; come over to my tent and talk."

"Talk or fight, it is all one, *bahadur!* To hear is to obey!"

"Come on, then," answered Dick, leading the way.

II

DICK'S tent, that had been a Russian officer's not long ago, was fenced about with branches, so that he had some privacy; he could speak above a whisper without being overheard, unless some eavesdropper were crouching in the shadows, and that was a matter attended to exactly by sentries. They thrust bayonets into every likely lurking-place at frequent and uncertain intervals.

That incessant guarding against spies was none of Dick's ordering, for he was satisfied if the outer and inner pickets were well placed and wide awake; but Usbeg Ali Khan knew his East from the inside outward, and did not need to guess where the greater danger lay. By Usbeg Ali's orders, Dick and he and Andry could approach Dick's tent unchallenged, but no other man could try the trick and live.

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There was a fire set inside the brushwood fence, and a couple of rough chairs stood by it in proof that Dick had not learned yet to prefer the Eastern squat, or sprawl. The last thing that an Asiatic calls for is a chair; it is almost the first thing that a Briton demands about him. Dick sat down with evident relief that yet did not lack dignity, and Usbeg Ali at a sign from him took the other chair with a painstaking effort to imitate his manner. Dick crossed one leg above the other, and though the attitude cramped all his Eastern muscles Usbeg Ali followed suit.

"We must move at once," said Dick, "before——"

He lapsed into silence, half-way through a sentence as his habit sometimes was when his thoughts were serious and swift, seeming to credit his listener with brain enough to finish the sentence for himself. He stretched his legs toward the blaze now, staring straight into it, and the firelight danced, reflected in his eyes until there seemed fire behind them.

Beyond, in the distance, the call of sentries cut the silence up into sub-sections, each shouting in his turn, in English or what he thought was English, to assure the next man and the main guard that he lived and was awake.

"Nahmah—see-kas—a-a-a-a-s—well!"

"Nummah—sare-vin—a-a-a-a-s—well!"

"Hah! *Bismillah*, yes!" said Usbeg Ali suddenly, squinting upward at the stars. "Surely I understand! Before she—that woman—makes more trouble we must move!"

Dick did not answer him at once, though his eyes signaled that he had heard and was listening. He too seemed interested in the weather.

"Would God, *bahadur*, that her pretty throat was slit, and bled pale-dry these weeks gone! Then our plans could have been men's plans fit for fighting men, and not contingent on a woman's whim. May Allah blight her, sleeping and awake! I beg Allah's pardon that I mention her name and His!"

"I meant," said Dick, "we must move before the rain makes the roads too sticky. Enough to mire the Russians hub-deep will suit our purpose, for with only six guns we can travel light. But it's time to move!"

"Aye, before we are ready, because a woman moves first!"

"We are ready," answered Dick.

"Aye! Ready again to run from a woman!"

If Usbeg Ali thought that by aggravating Dick he could make him argue, or disclose his plan a little sooner, or perhaps change whatever his plan might be into one that suited the Afghan better, he had yet to begin to understand Dick. All that his retort drew was a smile of amusement that was so evidently genuine it riled Usbeg Ali to the verge of being insolent.

"Aye!"

"Aye! Surely it is a great jest, *bahadur!* By Allah, a jewel of a jest! It was a jest when she flung her knife and missed but by so much! It is a jest that she warns the Russians now, and gathers an army for our undoing! Aye! I have laughed at it until my sides ache—even as I would surely weep above her grave!"

Dick took no notice, so the Afghan's voice changed and he leaned forward to touch Dick's knee for emphasis.

"*Bahadur!* What good ever came of listening to women, or of treating them as more than women? What good came yet of talking to them about anything but women's matters, or of making bargains with them? Tell me, *bahadur*, what good—what tiny, one small atom of the least good thing has come of your acquaintance with the Princess Olga Karageorgovich, or of the mercy you have shown her again and again? Prove to me that it would not have been good to split her down the middle like a carcass of veal with that great sword of thine!"

DICK patted his shirt, and something bulky showed for a second, bulging underneath. The Afghan, all eyes and ears and interest for the point at issue, did not see Dick shudder, or remark from under the protection of his sheepskin coat that the mountain air was chill. But a shadow moved out of the shadows at Dick's back.

"Put this on ye, Mr. Dicky," said a voice, and a Russian military-cloak evolved from gloom, suspended like a deeper shadow in the black night between the fire and the enormous man who held it.

"Thought you were otherwise engaged, Andry!"

"Aye! I've been verra much preoccupied. An' then it tuk me several meenits to

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get this. The chiel wha stripped it fram a Roosian corrrpse fancied his ownership an' his skill f'r fechtin'."

"And——?"

"He'll recover by-an'- by I hae no doot!"

Dick took the overcoat and Andry backed away. Third in command, the big man had not once foregone the privilege of fixing up Dick's bed for him, and he had thrashed more than one Persian for daring to forestall him. Some one had forestalled him now, and Dick could hear him muttering like a discontented boar-hound as he pulled the bed to pieces and began arranging it anew.

Overhead a few stars shone like incandescent lights between the racing clouds. The drone of voices that had mingled hitherto into one noise that was silence died now, and lesser sounds that were inaudible before began to assert themselves. Night birds and night animals broke silence. Bats flitted on soft wings amid the smoke of waning fires, and flames that leaped in a last dance before they died lit up a hundred tents irregularly. Always, in a circle that knew no end or no beginning, the wakeful pickets called their numbers each to each.

"Nummah—twain-tee-see-kas—a-a-a-a-s—well!"

"Nurmor — twennee - sarvin—a-a-a-a-s—well!"

"If we had not met the Princess," said Dick, "Andry would not have met her maid. If I had killed the Princess, as you say you wish I had, she could not have slipped and given her maid the chance to get this to Andry."

He drew a bulky package from inside his shirt, and laid it on his knee. Usbeg Ali's eyes sparkled at once, and the flow of mere words failed him, for he was a soldier down to his iron-boned core; it needed but a very little glimpse of the road ahead to lift him out of pessimism to its opposite.

"Spread it out, *bahadur!*" he urged, for he recognized on Dick's knee what the whole secret government of Russia would have given all it could give to recover, and in Dick's eye and attitude he saw the birth of plans. He remembered now Dick's habit of making plan by plan as he went on, and of never looking very far ahead. That instant he understood. The understanding dawned on him that he was present now when the first firm outline of a plan was being drawn, confided in the minute there was anything Dick could confide.

"Bring something for a table," ordered Dick.

Darkness had ears again, and it was Andry who replied—

"Ou-ay!"

THERE were men of all trades with that host of Persians, not fewest of them carpenters, and in Dick's absence Usbeg Ali Khan had set as many of them to work at their own trades as could be used to good advantage. The table that Andry brought out of black space was big and firm. Dick laid the packet on it and drew a map out of the envelope.

The firelight danced and glowed then on three men's faces, for Andry came and laid gnarled fists on the table-edge, leaning between Dick and Usbeg Ali Khan to pore over the details and wonder at the intricacy of the drawings.

"Bring a lamp!"

Andry obeyed, setting a lantern in the middle of the part marked "Caspian Sea," and then bending close by Dick again, breathing heavily. He and Usbeg Ali Khan took turns to swipe dead night-insects away with wide impatient arm-sweeps.

"See?" said Dick. "See Russia's game? See the treachery? While the fighting goes on in Europe Russia moves southward into Persia, square by square. It's like a game of chess. There's the old camp where the troops were concentrated years ago for the war against the Turkomans; they've turned it into a huge base, ready for the swoop southward, and our rebellion has given them excuse. See their lines of march—here, and here, and here? No stopping at Teheran! The Persian Gulf or nothing, and along this way westward into Asia Minor afterward! The occupation will be an accomplished fact before whoever wins in the big war will have time to remonstrate!"

"Aye!" said Usbeg Ali, studying the map with eyes that seemed likely to burn holes in it. "But see these marks drawn across the Caspian Sea—these, and this—these are where the transports are to come, and there are no more transports; we—you, *bahadur*—smashed them all!"

"They'll come overland," said Dick. "They can't afford to wait for new ships;

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they'll hurry. They'll swoop down these dotted lines in such force that we'd be trodden under and scarcely noticed if we stood directly in the way. There are half a million men camped to the north of the Atrak River, and any number more ready to reinforce them if needed. We can't stand in the way of half a million and expect to do anything worth mentioning."

"But Persia," objected Usbeg Ali. "Persia is with us! Persia will rise at a word from us!"

"Persia must!" Dick answered grimly. "Unless she prefers to bend under a Russian yoke she must rise and guard our backs."

"Our backs?" Usbeg Ali Khan and Andry each said the word together, and looked up from the map at Dick.

"Backs!" said Dick. "Would you suggest invading Russia in the teeth of all those army corps? Look, one here—two here—one here—another one here, look."

"Nay, not invade, but——"

"They'd roll over us like a boat caught beam-on if we stood and waited for them!"

"Aye." Usbeg Ali Khan's chin had dropped, and all the pugnacity seemed gone from him. He looked like a man succumbing to the iron logic of events, yet hating to acknowledge it. "And if we retreated to the southward, we would be a living army that could make terms."

"Maybe," Dick answered, and Usbeg Ali Khan looked glummer yet. Andry, though, was actually smiling. Dick looked from one man to another, betraying no symptom of emotion of any kind, except that his fingers were clenched tight on his sword-hilt.

"Have you any suggestion, Andry?"

"Na-na! I'll hauld ma breath to fecht wi'. I ken weel there'll be fechtin'!"

"Where, then? In which direction?"

"I dinna ken, an' I dinna fash masel'. I'm ready, an' that's enough! Point y'r finger, an' I'll gang alang an' fecht!"

"Have you no plan, Usbeg Ali?"

THE Afghan knitted his brows above the map as if he would devour it, shifting the lantern this way and that for a better view. Whichever way he looked, along whichever route, there seemed nothing but Cossack preparations for invasion. If they left the Elburz Mountain range behind, there would be no place that he could see where seven or eight thousand men could slip themselves and hide from Russia's swarms.

"Let us march straight across north Persia, then, *bahadur*, by forced marches, and rest with our backs against Afghanistan. There will be thousands from the fighting tribes of northern India to hurry to our aid, if only for the loot and the fun of a dig at Russia's ribs!"

"Not bad," said Dick. His hilt was clutched more tightly than ever, and Andry with a sidelong glance at it grinned to himself. He had known Dick in the school-days, and he knew the child was father to the man.

"But that would be giving Russia a clear road, Usbeg Ali. They'd cut us off from the whole of Persia. Defeat would be inevitable sooner or later, and our only chance then would be to retire into Afghanistan or India. In either case we would have to surrender to the British Government, for the Amir wouldn't dare recognize us officially."

"Then wait for their advance, *bahadur*, and swoop down on their flanks as they go by! Let us do all the damage that eight thousand can do before we die like men!"

"Better, but not good enough!"

Andry had to put a hand over his mouth, to keep his chuckles to himself. One by one he recognized the signs, and knew that while Dick talked his brain was working out the last plan anybody else would think of, yet by miles the best.

"See here, Usbeg Ali. The Russian plans are for an invasion of Persia from the north and east of the Caspian. The troops from the northwest were to cross the Caspian, and they can't do that now because we've sunk their ships. But their objective remains the same. They will go by train around the north end of the Caspian and come down on the eastern side with the others, or behind them, if they're needed."

"That is evident, *bahadur*."

"They've made no plans on the basis of a possible reverse. They've calculated on swamping everything. These camps up here, where they're concentrated, aren't fortified; there are practically no forts anywhere that amount to anything. And the western side of the Caspian is open to us."

"Allah!"

Usbeg Ali Khan saw Dick's plan now, and gasped at the daring of it.

"There's an enormous difference," said

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Dick, "between eight thousand men and five hundred thousand. We can live off the country. We can travel forty miles a day, which half a million can't do. We'll invade Russia! Raid like a whirlwind up the western shore of the Caspian! We may have the luck to capture Baku! In any case, Russia must send troops back around the north end again to meet us. Before they reach Baku if we want to run we can race back here, where we'll be stronger than ever. If we succeed at all, there'll be hundreds of thousands eager to join us when we get back. See the point? A raid, that will take Russia off her guard!"

"By the blood of God, but that will be the greatest wonder of the world!"

"If we stay in Persia, the Russians will use us as excuse for invasion," Dick continued, thinking out aloud. "But if we invade Russia we can at least delay their advance; and if Persia can't rise behind us then, Persia is too dead to care for!"

"And Persia is not dead!" swore Usbeg Ali. "She has only eaten Russian bribes until she is stupefied. A happening or two would awaken her!"

"Good! Get me twenty gallopers!" said Dick. "Twenty must start at dawn and pass the word all through the north! Pick me the best two hundred men we have to scout to the westward. Let our advance scouts leave at dawn; we'll follow them as soon as maybe! There are five hundred miles of trail ahead, and after that—the fighting!"

"Allah!" muttered Usbeg Ali as Dick folded up the map. He sat still, leaning against the table thinking and listening.

IT WAS barely midnight, but the darkness seemed awake, and the far-spaced pickets now shouted words that were not mere numbers. The tang of the camp-fire smoke grew stronger as some sleepers moved, listened to the shouting, and began to stir the embers. In a minute more the whole camp listened with held breath. There even came the sound of breech-blocks snapping home.

Dick heard a sharp command to halt, and an answering voice that was not Eastern. The vowels of the farther West are unmistakable, even when midnight adds mystery to distance and unexpectedness robs men of their judgment.

"All *right!*" somebody remonstrated, in an accent that was neither clubland English nor yet less than gentlemanly. "They're up! Can't you see?"

There followed loud-growled orders and some crashing of the outer ring of forest, that proved precaution; by the sound, two or three hundred men passed to the rear of the arrival before Dick heard him ordered to advance. Then a horseman came careering out of blackness and reined in on his horse's haunches two yards from Dick's private hedge, with a bayonet exactly one-eighth of an inch away from his naked throat.

"Let him come!" commanded Dick.

The bayonet withdrew, and its wielder held the horse while the man dismounted.

"Amerikani!" said the horseman, salaaming low to Dick. Then, in broken English, "An American—he says—he has message." Then in Persian, "The commander of the guard says, 'Shall we bring him in or shoot him?' "

"Bring him in," said Dick.

At a shout from Usbeg Ali some one came and threw fresh fuel on the fire; the sparks leaped up heavenward so that Dick's enclosure was all golden, and the three within it were silhouetted black against the night. Dick sat, and the others stood, as a rather fat man dressed in well-cut khaki was brought forward between a dozen guards.

"Whose are those?" demanded Dick.

"His pistols," said a Persian, laying down two automatics on Dick's table.

"Yours? asked Dick.

"Yes," said the American.

"Take them, then."

Only the care with which he did not betray surprise was evident as the man replaced his pistols in the holsters at his belt.

"Go!" commanded Dick, and the guard hurried away, back to the outer ring of gloom.

"My name is Jenison," said the newcomer, "Morgan L. Jenison."

Dick did not answer, but appeared to make a mental note.

"Am I right in supposing you are Richard Anthony?"

Again Dick did not answer. To a man whose only pride was in his worthiness to bear the name of Anthony the subject of his namelessness was painful, under all the circumstances.

"His name is *No Name!*" Usbeg Ali boomed; his voice was like an echo from the

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dead, so that the American could not resist a shudder.

"It was that that I came to speak about," he said, looking straight at Dick.

Dick did not answer. He could wait. Every line of his strong face, each bump and contour of his red head was a written proof that he could wait, and pass swift judgment when the right time came.

"I'm deliberately risking the charge of not minding my own business—of butting in!"

The American spoke like a gentleman. His voice was well controlled, and he had plenty of assurance without the least suspicion of illbreeding. The only fault Dick found with him as yet was that, to use his own expression, he had butted in.

So far Dick had not addressed one word to him, either of encouragement or disapproval, yet the man had sufficient command of himself to seem at ease. Dick liked that, but did not choose to show it. Andry clucked behind him in dour Scots disregard. Usbeg Ali Khan looked savage, since he believed himself handsomest and most impressive so; he made a point of looking savage always, when there seemed nothing else particular to do.

"I've become acquainted with a lady who calls herself the Princess Olga Karageorgovich," said Jenison, watching Dick's face with lynx eyes, that yet were not inquisitive enough to arouse resentment. "She's in a bad way. She made me an offer which I accepted, and I've come to tell you what it is."

"I've nothing to do with her," said Dick at once.

"It's I who am offering to bargain," answered Jenison. "I've bought control, you must deal with me if you want to do business."

"I don't!" said Dick.

"Let me tell you what the business is? You might change your mind."

Dick nodded. The American looked left and right, at Andry and Usbeg Ali Khan.

"I've no secrets from these two men," said Dick.

"Well, that's your affair. I was in Teheran on business until recently, and I may say I've heard from a dozen sources about your campaign against the Russians. You've had my sympathy from the start. In America we don't admire Russian methods much. The man who told me most about you was named Lancaster; I understand you rescued him from a Russian jail in Astrabad. I don't know why he has it in for you, but I disagreed with several things he said, and we ended by differing entirely. But before we fell out he told me a lot, and I spent a good deal of thought shaking out what I took to be facts from what seemed imagination."

Dick looked very interested, which was proof that the American had made a good impression. Further proof was Dick's signal to Andry. The huge man carried up a chair.

"Take a seat," said Dick, and Jenison sat down, not failing to notice Andry's forethought; the chair was set where the brightest firelight would fall directly on him. At once Jenison turned the apparent disadvantage into gain, letting all his natural, national vivacity betray itself and giving Dick full view of a face that could not have played so freely and extravagantly had he been lying

"So, when this news of a European war came you seemed to me the most likely man within reach who could help me take a hand in it. At the American Legation they're in a state of nervous exhaustion trying to be neutral, and I'd have been arrested if I'd let out a hint of my intentions. But I managed to round up ten Americans, and what with their servants and some Englishmen we knew, and their servants, and some Afghans who had come through from Kabul to do business with me, I got together a party, fifty strong.

"We slipped out of Teheran at night before they had shut the lid down quite so tight as they've got it now. We headed straight in your direction, and on the way the boys agreed to elect me captain of the force. I accepted. I'm Captain Jenison at present, in command of fifty men."

Dick looked up, and stared at Usbeg Ali. The Afghan did not move.

"Didn't I give you orders?" Dick inquired. "Are those gallopers ready, and the scouts?"

"Pardon, *bahadur!*"

USBEG ALI hurried out of the enclosure, and almost at once his voice split the night apart as he shouted for company commanders. The camp awoke and the amphitheater roared as the night roars over the bazaars of Nishni Novgorod, or in Port Said when

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the battle fleets are coaling; it was the roar of will-be-readiness, that makes men and animals half drunk with eagerness to start.

"On the way," said Jenison, "I learned that we were close behind you. At all the villages we were told you were just ahead, preaching a 'jehad' against Russia—and you may believe me, Mr. Anthony, you've preached to some purpose! There was no pretense of enthusiasm! Man, they're, crazy to join you! I could have brought ten thousand with me, and I'd have done it if I'd been quite sure of my reception! Once I'd satisfied them we were riding to aid you, they treated us like princes!"

Dick, thinking, as his habit was, two for anybody else's one, and seeming to carry on two separate sets of thoughts at once, held up his hand for a pause. Then he took paper and a pencil and wrote in Persian.

"Give that to Usbeg Ali," he ordered, and Andry marched out of the enclosure.

"Go on," said Dick, and the American smiled, for that was Dick's first admission of real interest.

"I came on the Princess on the way. She was destitute in the hands of Persians in a filthy village about half way between Teheran and Astrabad. They had her in chains and I had a hard job; and we came as close to fighting as we could and miss. Finally I persuaded 'em I had your orders, and told 'em I'd burn the village if they refused. I gave them nearly all the cash I had into the bargain."

Something that might have been an oath escaped Dick, and Jenison allowed a grin to spread across his face. He was rather too fat but very good-looking when he grinned, and somehow one could not associate a lie or a meanness with his expression.

"On the way here she opened up to me, and I understand your sentiments toward her are not exactly cordial." He paused to chuckle, and Dick swore softly to himself. "She told me a lot. Said you would rather eat her alive than be polite to her. But I discounted that at rather more than the usual rate per cent. and conceded from what I've heard of you that you're not the man to leave any woman at the mercy of savages, or expect anybody else to do it! Am I right?"

Dick did not answer. He detested mere words about chivalry—believed only in the uttermost, far-fetched, quixotic deed. He loathed the Princess—shuddered at the mention of her name—wished her dead—and approved of this man's action. There was nothing to be said.

"She told me she daren't go back to Russia, because things she did for you have cost her the pull she had with the secret government. She says the least they'd do to her would be to send her to Siberia. I saw what the Persians were likely to do to her if I hadn't come on the scene. There was nothing for it but to take her under my protection. And I did."

He said the last three words with an inflection that meant more than a half dozen sentences. This man and Dick were almost as much foreigners as if one had been German and the other French. Their education had been different, their up-bringing, environment, and rules of the game; yet they arrived at the same conclusion in much the same way, and understood each other instantly.

"I don't envy you!" said Dick.

"It occurred to me you'd take that attitude. So I played safe. I've made quite a story about my being your man. They ended by believing me your deputy. If we can't come to terms now, I shall raise the whole countryside—not against you, you understand, but under my command and independent of you—and you'll find that awkward. My men are less than a half-mile away. I'll lead them away again if you prefer it, and——"

DICK'S eyes were twinkling, and Jenison cut short his argument. He recalled now that this strange, strong-faced man with the tawny hair was an outlaw, who had put to sea on stolen Russian ships and sunk a Russian fleet—scarcely a man to take chances with. And he had made no bargain in advance, nor made use of a white flag! He was a prisoner, unless Dick proved magnanimous! He turned at the sound of a heavy footfall approaching from behind, and saw Andry loom enormous into the firelight. Andry handed Dick his note back, and Jenison's sharp eyes detected writing scrawled across its face.

"Very well," said Dick, and Andry took stand again behind Dick's chair. Dick looked at Jenison and smiled with quiet amusement that was very aggravating. "In about ten minutes, Mr. Jenison, your men will be here."

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"You mean you've taken advantage of my being here to capture them?"

"Exactly that," said Dick.

"Am I a prisoner?"

"Not at all," said Dick. "You may go if you wish."

"I call that quibbling!" said the American.

"You're free to call it anything you like!"

"Well. My case isn't stated yet. As I understand it, there is just one person in the world, or in this part of the world, who can swear to your identity. She is the Princess Olga Karageorgovich, and she has made terms with me. She can prove you are who you say you are, and that'll make the British Government see sense. Am I right?"

Dick did not even nod, but he looked very interested, and Jenison grew more and more certain of his ground.

"The Princess—who dares not go back to Russia because she is in possession of tremendous Russian secrets, and because of things she did for you—needs protection. For the time being her case and mine are one."

Dick smiled, but Jenison went on.

"Provided, then, that you accept me and my fifty, give us a fling at Russia, and recognize the Princess as a member of my party under my protection, I will guarantee that at the first opportunity she shall swear to your identity and to the details of Russia's treatment of you. Further she shall hand to you, to hand over to the British Government, all the official secrets in her possession in return for British Government protection for her later. Is it a bargain?"

"No," said Dick, evidently listening with both ears.

Jenison's face fell, for he was making no attempt to mask emotion. Evidently he was speaking truth, and offering terms he would abide by; just as evidently Dick was not so much as hesitating. The refusal was pointblank. Then Jenison too caught sound of the approaching tramp of men and horses, and the lines of his face showed speculation.

DICK left him sitting where he was and walked through the gap in his enclosure into outer darkness. In two minutes he was standing before a weary little crowd, who eyed him distrustfully, leaderless and out of heart. Their weapons had not been taken away from them, and their rifles were all loaded, but they were surrounded at close range by so many men that fighting would have been suicide; only in front, where Dick stood smiling at them, was there room to move.

"Are you men Jenison's?" Dick asked.

"We are," said an Englishman with that voiced disregard of consequences that is the trade-mark of his kind and breed.

A woman—surely the Princess, even through her rags, for no woman in the world could sit a horse with half her grace—thrust her horse forward through the crowd.

"Dick!" she said; but Dick took no notice of her.

"Are you all Jenison's?" asked Dick.

There was a murmur of assent.

"Any man of you who would rather leave Jenison, hold up his hand and speak!"

There was neither voice nor movement.

"You really wish to be identified with him? You Afghans too? You Persians too?"

There was no possibility of mistake about the answer; their regard for Jenison was sound and steady.

"Very well. See that they have rations, Usbeg Ali. Quarter them beyond the artillery lines."

He strode back, in through the gap in his hedge into the firelight, and found Andry standing over Jenison, growling at him like a watch-dog at a tramp.

"I've warned ye! Move, an' y'r nex' move's tae y'r grave!" Andry was close enough to crush the American if he so much as looked at his pistols. "Ye're a fat man—y'r ribs are flabby—ye'd give inwards like a bladder! Hae a care!"

"That'll do," said Dick, and Andry stepped away. Unbidden, Jenison stood up, for he was aware of a new atmosphere that was as obvious as it was unexplainable. Without knowing why, he was certain that Dick had reached some conclusion, and he almost expected to be hustled away and shot.

"It's a pity you took such a high hand," said Dick, "and committed yourself so hopelessly with the Princess."

"I did what no gentleman could have helped doing," said Jenison testily. "It was because I understood you to be a gentleman that I left Teheran and led those good fellows to find you."

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"Yes," said Dick. "And that's my reason for what I say now."

Jenison stared.

"You're responsible for the Princess, and I shall hold you so. Keep her under guard; see that she doesn't interfere with me, my men, or the woman who used to be her maid. On those terms, if you wish to follow me on this expedition I'll take your oath now. I warn you, it won't be a picnic party! Better think twice!"

"I'll come!" said Jenison.

"Hold up your right hand, then," said Dick. "Now, swear your own bond."

"I give my word of honor to obey you, and to lead my men as you direct, so long as your efforts are against Russia."

"Very well," said Dick, and Andry clucked as the two shook hands and looked into each other's eyes.

"He's a fat man!" muttered Andry. "He's no gude at a'!"

"Could your men handle guns?" asked Dick.

"I've four ex-British soldiers, and six Americans who've served in the States; I've two Americans who've actually made guns."

"Then, we're well met! I needed you! But I shall hold you strictly responsible for *her!* You understand?"

III

PROOF of the charm that the Princess Olga Karageorgovich possessed was that even in her tattered clothes, awry, wet and travel stained, she still looked lovely. Proof of her tireless deviltry and unassuagable ambition was that even at midnight, in the armed camp of her enemies, she set about new mischief.

She seemed so constituted that the world must center on herself, revolve around her, and obey her whim if she were to have any peace at all; and her energy was such that even at peace she must be scheming for the mastery. Peace could only come of conquest. She was autocracy incarnate, out of date.

Dick too was out of date in one way. His sense of chivalry was older than the everlasting hills, and equally untouched by "progress;" but he was ahead of his age in nearly all other things. He chafed at the hint of despotism—hated personal rule of any kind at all—and only accepted the leadership that had been thrust on him because he saw no other way of leading Persia on to liberty.

Watching him from the shadows cast by a crackling camp-fire, loving him with all the passion in her savage heart, yet hating him because he dared despise her, the Princess let her quick brain leap from point to point of impudent idea, until in a dozen minutes she was ready with a scheme which should reëstablish her and either ruin Dick or else humble him and make him hers. *He* had put *her* out of mind.

Her nerve was back again. She knew herself better off as virtual prisoner in Dick's camp than as a fugitive at large in an uprisen Persia. And because the devil loves his own and does his best for them, circumstances seemed to play into her hands at once. As she sat on a rough-hewn camp-stool, looking like a humble Cinderella with her toes in the ashes, a woman passed her whom she recognized at the first swift glance.

"Marie!" she whispered; but the woman hurried on.

"Marie Mouquin!"

Now the wide world in its every social and national phase knows to its enduring sorrow what the weight of the temptation is to turn and talk. The old proverb about a scorched child not playing with the flame is even a bigger lie than most. Marie Mouquin, free from the Princess and beyond her reach, turned—just to sneer at her, and prove she was not afraid—turned, and was caught.

"Bah!" said Marie, with a lip that curled. There were no words, even in French, that were able to embody her contempt. Besides, in Dick's camp there was always a tendency to imitate his economy of words.

"Was I never good to you?" the Princess asked. "Did you ever go hungry in my service?"

Mother-pity took possession instantly of Marie Mouquin's will, whispering to her plausible bad logic about gratitude. She recalled, in a swift-flashed moving-picture reel, the thousand and one meals the Princess had shared with her, and what the little delicacies often had meant. How much more, then, must the lack of them mean now to her erstwhile mistress? She looked down at an untouched mess of greasy rice on a dirty wooden platter, and a second later she was hurrying through the dark-

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ness, dodging here and there between the groups of armed men.

WITHIN five minutes she had snatched and put together half a dozen different sorts of food that had been prepared under her supervision for the wounded; and she arranged them on a white plate that was her own particular prerogative. Even Dick Anthony ate from native platters in that camp.

She called a messenger, gave him the dish, and then thought better of it. Curiosity and pity blended. Wisdom went to the winds, pushed out. She brought the food to the Princess with her own hands, and stood to watch her eat it—still with a sneer on her face. Perhaps flies sometimes sneer at spiders, when they go to see how ugly and how obvious a web can be.

The Princess did not look up. She ate daintily, and thrilled Marie Mouquin's generous little soul by the evident relish with which she ate. Her right foot came out from under a tattered skirt with a movement that seemed so unstudied that Marie Mouquin did not even notice it until more than the shoe appeared. Then—slave of habit as we all are—Marie Mouquin checked a little scream.

It had been her duty—more, her pride—year after year since the Princess was a girl, to see her most beautiful figure and shapeliest of limbs clad properly in garments fit for a Princess of Russia.

"Have you no stockings?" she gasped.

"One torn one," said the Princess between mouthfuls.

"Oh!"

Marie Mouquin had only one pair of her own, that she washed daily at a stream. She had them on that minute. They were darned nearly all over, yet so skilfully that they were soft still, and shapely. Without a second's hesitation she sat down on the earth and pulled them off. The Princess pulled them on with a matter-of-fact air, that did not lack gratitude but did not suggest the possibility of any other course.

Years of intimacy, during which no questions had ever needed to be asked, had taught Marie Mouquin just what questions to ask now; and since charity must follow understanding, the Princess's utter want of clothing appealed to her ex-maid more keenly than a wound would have done, or tears, or handcuffs.

"But I have no other clothes!" she wailed, wringing her hands in agonized gestures as she used to do when a milliner, perhaps, was twenty minutes late with some "creation." Sheer shame would not permit her to leave the Princess in such predicament, yet she could not take her own clothes off and go naked.

"There are only a Persian woman's clothes," she said after a moment; and she might have noticed, had she not been too distracted, that the violet eyes glowed brighter at the news.

"I could make shift," said the Princess. "I would be grateful."

ALMOST before the words had died Marie Mouquin was gone again, barefoot, at a run through the noisy camp. Andry, hurrying across the amphitheater with giant strides on some errand for Dick, intercepted her, picked her off the ground, and demanded to know what the bare toes meant. But she struggled free, slapped his face for his trouble, and ran away laughing.

She pounced on a Persian woman who was sleeping near the quiet lines where the wounded lay, and shook her into consciousness. She jabbered French to her, not a word of which the Persian woman understood. Suddenly she spied the woman's bundle of possessions, jumped on it, and hurriedly undid the string. The woman screamed and remonstrated, but Marie Mouquin's agile fingers opened the soiled cloth bag and drew a motley assortment of Eastern clothes out one by one.

Some she discarded instantly, as far too soiled or shabby. Some were too ostentatious. Some she threw into a little heap, and knelt on to prevent the woman from recovering them. At last there was a complete set of Persian clothing all together, and she began to bargain for it.

The woman would not trade—said so in pantomime—claimed that the clothes were her treasures, heirlooms, all she had, and priceless. Marie Mouquin dived into a hidden pocket, drew money out, and pressed it on the Persian woman without troubling to count how much it was; then she left the woman murmuring amazement, and hurried back. In a very few more moments there sat a Persian woman, veiled and mute, where the Princess Olga Karageorgovich had been.

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There were several who had seen the change, but few who noticed it, and there was nobody who thought it necessary to say a word about it to Dick Anthony, or even to Jenison in whose charge the Princess was known to be. Men were too busy talking to the other newcomers, packing their haversacks or whatever campaign food conveyance each had improvised, speculating, cheering one another—too busy lighting fresh torches to replace the old ones, and searching for lost comrades at other camp-fires—to worry about one woman, and she a prisoner.

There were horses to be cold-shod in the dancing, uncertain torchlight. Men whom Dick chose from among a hundred picked by Usbeg Ali went riding out of camp at dawn, downward toward the plains and Astrabad with a message of red rebellion for a waiting countryside. The word they were to preach was, "Tides turn! Russia's tide flows back!" The name they were to whisper, to be shouted again from village on to village, was, "*No Name!*" They bore the hot breath of excitement with them, and left greater excitement yet aboil in the caldron that had spewed them out.

And before the first pale rays of morning lit the peaks near by, two hundred men drew up, each standing beside his horse, to listen to a homily from Dick. They were armed men—light men—horsed on the finest cattle yet looted from the Russian army. The Turkoman horses, girthed and loaded as a cavalryman's mount *must* be in spite of all his theories on riding light, strained at the bridles to fight one another as horse and man from Turkestan seem ever bound to do. The men, with the reins bound twice around wrists for safety's sake, stood still and silent. At their head was an Afghan, picked by Usbeg Ali from among his own personal following, the pride of being chosen for a post of danger exuding from him like x-rays.

"You men are scouts," said Dick, "not skirmishers. What I need to know is where the roads are, where are food and water. Later, I shall want to know where there are bodies of the enemy, but for the present we shall move too fast to need trouble about anything except what lies ahead. So, ride and report! Ride and report! And remember that the fate of this expedition lies for the present on your individual wakefulness!"

"*Salaam!*" said the Afghan.

"*Salaam!*" said Dick.

"*Salaam!*" said the scouts together, and Dick answered their salute.

Then, up and over one ridge and then another one that walled one end of Dick's strange amphitheater, the advance of his amazing expedition rode in single file, westward, to turn northward when the south end of the Caspian was passed; and the camp roared a farewell to them that continued until the last horse stumbled over the rise and dipped beyond it.

It was then that Andry caught Marie Mouquin in his arms and lifted her again, for both went about their new day's duties at the first pale peep of day.

"Where are y'r stockin's, lass?" he asked her.

"Gone!"

"Gone where?"

"They were worn out."

"Ye didn't gie them tae a woundit man?"

She shook her head.

"Nor to a Perrrrsian wumman?"

"No."

"I hae ma doots o' the brand o' truth y're tellin'," he assured her. "Wull. I'll steal ye a new pair at the first opportunity I get—mebbe a month fram noo! Now, listen to me—are ye listenin'?"

She nodded.

"Keep awa fra the Princess!"

She nodded again, and he kissed her until she sobbed for breath.

IV

THERE was a whole day yet before the real start was made—a long day—the longest and the least enjoyable in all Dick's life. Great men, for a reason that only they could tell of but that is itself reason enough for silence, seem to be gifted with unhappiness on the eve of their greatest effort. It is the quiet that goes before a storm. Perhaps it is the stage of receptivity in which they wait for strength.

There were things to be seen to by the hundred, each of them likely to be better done beneath Dick's eye, but not a fraction of which he could spare time for. He was busy each waking second, yet all he could do was superintend the supervision. He seemed never still; the men, busy with their preparations, saw him cross and recross the camp a hundred times, and each appearance was the signal for a new outburst

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of cheering. He was niggard of words, as ever; and almost for the first time since they knew him there was no smile to illuminate his face. Yet, no man in the amphitheater guessed what hell was raging in his heart; no man could understand him or be sorry for him. They exulted while he groaned inwardly.

True, Andry guessed a little of it, for he had held the boy Dick in his arms and had sat by the grown man's sick-bed. To him Dick dropped a word or two that were like drops of blood squeezed out of him. But Andry felt too much enthusiasm for the game ahead, and the blood of ever-raiding ancestors was coursing far too freely in his veins for him to have more than a very little sympathy for sorrow of any kind. His own heart was aflame with love; his love was near; and love is selfish.

Jenison guessed a little too, but only a very little. His confidence in Dick was growing apace, for a man of business can read character ten times more quickly than a mere diplomatist, and can read the outward signs of storm twenty times more quickly. But he misjudged the cause, while detecting the state of mind.

"Sore!" he told himself. "Sore as a bear! Sore at me—don't want me here, and can't get rid of me! Sorer still at the Princess, and can't get rid of her! Sorest of all because he can't see what the end'll be! Well —I'm in it for what comes of it—may as well die one way as another—but if he liked his chance better I'd like mine twice as well!"

To himself, in the loneliness that only great men ever know, and that is more terrible than that of outer space, Dick Anthony was praying just for comradeship—for one man who could look him in the eye and understand. He was thinking of the regiment of kilted men his father once had led, and that somewhere in Europe was being led now by some other man—he could name the man—against the Germans!

He was thinking of his rightful place in the van of Britain's army, of the quiet, astonishing humor of the mess, and of the hum of Scots ranks that is so different from all the other noises in the world. He would have rather been a subaltern in that one regiment of his dream, shot in the first fight, than commander-in-chief of any other army in the world. But he sweated his grief savagely, and saw to it that others sweated too, including Jenison.

JENISON proved to be a gift from the god of war to a man who could use gifts to their best advantage. His knowledge of Persian was deep—like Dick's, won in a university at home. His system of business—pugnacious was the word that he applied to it—made him in every essential except training a good soldier; and his keen mind, trained to follow pointers instantly and reason out the other fellow's likeliest next move, served him in better stead than his few months' training would a conscript.

He took charge of the guns, and set to work at once to pick the brains of all the men in the force who knew anything about them. Then he discovered things and taught them what they did not know; and at the end of a long grueling day he knew that he was ready to make men do what he never could have done himself. Dick, watching him without betraying the fact, coming on him unannounced, and asking shrewd unexpected questions, began to trust him; before night came he knew he had a man whom he dared order and then leave to find out how to put the order through.

It was obvious to anybody of discernment that there were spies in camp. Jenison thrashed one within an ace of his life for tampering with a gun-breech mechanism. Usbeg Ali Khan, released from his care of the guns and wandering about the camp with an eye for everything, pounced on several of them, and cut down one who tried to run, splitting his head from crown to chin.

But Dick expected to move too fast when he once got started to need to worry over what news filtered to his rear; there were almost no Russians now to the south of the Atrak river, and those few were scattered in small detachments that would dare do no more than pass the news along.

He gave out in the afternoon that he meant to swoop eastward for Teheran in three days' time; so at dusk some six or seven spies departed to carry that information, and no one was at any pains to follow them. By night there were not more than three suspicious characters remaining; they were hanging on, shamming enthusiasm for Dick's cause in case of a change of plan,

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and they were allowed to remain for exactly the same reason, since there is no surer way of fooling the enemy than by fooling his delvers after information.

Neither Dick nor yet Jenison made the mistake of overlooking the Princess Olga Karageorgovich. Usbeg Ali Khan rode over in her direction twenty times that day. Andry sought Marie Mouquin every half hour or so, kissed her, and asked questions. The Princess was the best-suspected woman in all Persia. Only they made the mistake of imagining their wits and watchfulness a match for hers.

Dick, sad to the verge of sickness, understood her sadness and respected it. He was neither surprised nor disappointed to learn that she was staying shut up in the tent assigned to her, and speaking to nobody. He gave orders that her ring of guards should keep a decent distance, and took good care not to cross her line of vision through the opening of the tent.

Jenison was just as pleased, and though he considered himself obliged to call to her occasionally as he passed and ask whether she lacked anything, he too kept himself aloof and out of sight.

DRESSED as a Persian woman—talking Persian reasonably well—and keyed to the highest pitch of cunning by desperation, the Princess, however, was a different creature, in a different mood, to the forlorn, disheveled woman who had ridden into camp. With a knowledge that was half instinct and half the result of observation, she began almost at once to take advantage of the Eastern veil behind which women rule the East.

Within an hour of her change of costume she had overheard and guessed all of Dick's arrangements about women. It was as good as signing his own death warrant for any man in that camp to interfere with any woman; the women came and went unquestioned, so long as they kept within the limits of the camp.

There was nothing to be said, nor anything for the guard to report to Dick, when the woman whose clothing Marie Mouquin had commandeered came next day to see her dress on its new owner. It was no business of the guard or of anybody else that the woman stayed with the Princess in her tent and talked.

But on the other hand, it was a logical corollary that one of the remaining spies should be hand in glove with the Princess before the middle of the afternoon, and that without seeing her or trespassing within earshot of her tent. He would not have been dangerous had he been one of the suspected.

The woman came out of the tent, took a bucket of water, and asked a man to fill it for her after the strange new order of things that Dick had set on foot. The man, laughing at the thought of doing menial work in public for any woman, obeyed her; and on his return she whispered a word to him that set his ears tingling and his brain agog for a means of hearing more.

A little later he was carried to the hospital between the trees, where the wounded lay on rough beds under any kind of shelter that could be improvised. He was suffering by that time from a new disease whose nature Marie Mouquin could not diagnose. His chief symptom seemed to be terrific pain, that made him writhe and robbed him of the power of speech.

Gentle massage appeared to afford him some relief, and he was handed over to a woman presently with orders to massage him until he fell asleep. But after a little while her attentions began to aggravate the pain; and it was then, when he screamed with agony, that another woman—she whose clothes the Princess wore and for whom he had carried water—crossed over to suggest a different method.

Under the gentle ministration of her fingers the pain appeared to leave him; soon the second woman had him in charge altogether while the first looked on; soon Marie Mouquin saw the first woman sitting doing nothing, and sent her packing to attend to another case.

So, under a tremendous walnut tree whose steady drip-drip-drip drowned whispering and precluded eavesdropping—protected fully by Dick's stern prohibition of approach—under the very eyes of Marie Mouquin and the guards who hedged the hospital about—a man in the secret pay of Russia got in touch with the Princess who but a little while ago had been the mainspring of Russia's secret influence.

He happened to be a veteran in his service—one whom other spies obeyed by reason of a master-word he knew. And since spying, as Russia uses it, is a blending of iron system with fine elastic art, he was not

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without resources on the spot nor means of using them. The spies who had left camp with the news Dick gave out for a blind were mere independent units such as any land under the sun can furnish for any occasion at a moment's notice—mere pariahs eager to snatch at the penny bribes. The two remaining, though, were system underlings, known to the spy-chief if not knowing him.

So, when he begged to be carried down to the stream that he might wash himself, four men were pressed into the service of whom one knew enough to jump at a word let fall by the said-to-be-sick man—and enough more to resume his placid, uninterested look immediately afterward; then he listened with both ears, and unlike the others he did not draw aside while the said-to-be-sick man washed. He happened to be one of the men on night-guard duty. His place was by a dark rock in the middle of the far-spaced outer ring of pickets.

So he established communication that night with another man whose specialty was existence on the outer edge—a man who never trespassed into traps, but who could run like the desert wind and carry a message between a camel and his shadow; and the result was that when Dick Anthony moved off at break of the following day there was a little train of very tired men, dusty and foot-sore, who followed at a distance, eating the jettison that always lies in an army's wake, and ready to run with as many messages as might be given them.

But long before that arrangement was complete, another and more complex one had been made within the camp. Messengers without messages would have been useless as messages without a meaning or authoritative source. There was need of a master-mind within the camp, free to make use of these links with the outer world. So at dusk, when the tired men lay by their arms and stared into the fires or talked or sang, and nobody within the camp was very watchful, the woman whose clothes the Princess wore entered the tent and stayed there. And the Princess passed out among the shadows.

DICK ANTHONY, striding by five minutes later, asked a guard if all was well and was answered in the affirmative. Jenison, crossing the camp to sup with Dick by invitation, called out to the Princess by name; he received an answer from within the tent and went on satisfied.

"Poor devil!" he muttered. "She *may* have been a devil, but she's lost her nerve, and a devil without nerve has no more chance than a four-card straight."

But the devil, poor as Jenison had called her, in borrowed plumes, was making use that minute of borrowed liberty to find out for herself what chance she had. All she needed was one little chance, that a man perhaps might overlook. Princess of Russia, she was not greedy just then, nor over self-assertive. She was quite content to take advantage of Dick's quixotic blanket orders about women, and to shelter her identity beneath a Persian veil.

Men passed her, and some greeted her; but it was none of their affair whither she was going nor why she did not answer; it was conceded to be safest in that camp not to have anything at all to say to any woman, so the men did not turn their heads to look twice at her. Sincere imitation of Dick Anthony was half their reason; fear of him the other half. Under men like Dick, good women have a chance to be good, but the bad ones may find advantages to seize.

Andry, who ate by himself in a hurry, gnawing a big bone like a hound and hurling it away into the darkness for the jackals to find and quarrel for, sat later swearing at Dick's order that forbade visiting his sweetheart after dark. Good Calvinistic morals had been beaten into him before he was old enough to fight back, and Scots regard for the outside of propriety was his birthright; he would have been the first to cite Holy Writ had anybody else dared hint at love when the light had waned. But his Marie seemed different from anybody else's girl, and his love far truer than the ordinary mortal's.

So he grew disgruntled; and there was only one remedy for that. From a bag that was growing shabby he drew out Dick's bagpipes, and the dark began to hum like an angry hornet-swarm as the drones gave tongue. Then a melody tripped forth from the chanter, picked gladsomely by dancing fingers that could each have snapped an ordinary fellow's wrist. The men beside the camp-fires, some of whom had long grown used to Highland tunes, took up the refrain and thundered words to it that Robbie Burns never so much as dreamed of. With-

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in ten minutes the camp was alive with song, and aglow with fires that threw leaping, ghoulish shadows.

Rain came down—not the steady downpour of a couple of thousand feet below, but a swishing, ice-cold savagery that shrieked through the lines in advance of a whip-lash wind and boiled in the smoky fires. But the song continued and the bagpipes skirled and shrieked. More fuel was heaped on the discouraged fires, and the din became jollier because there was more need of joy, and they were soldiers.

The shadows grew blacker and the men less watchful. All eyes were for the bright spots where the fires glowed hot—even Dick Anthony's. He sat beneath a canopy outside his tent, with his chin on a hand, in no brown study but fighting hard with the homesickness that had him by the throat, and the even greater sick yearning for recognition by men whose personal opinion of him mattered. Nothing could have induced him to turn his back now and forget his promise to lead the little army; but he was bitter with the knowledge that whatever came of it his own motives were sure to be misconstrued.

His guards, thrusting their bayonets in here and there, were the only men on the alert within the amphitheater, and even they kept a less bright lookout than before the cold rain came. At intervals they shrugged up underneath whatever shelter they could find, to warm themselves, and when at last they saw Dick Anthony draw out a plan, lay it on a table at his side and grow absorbed in it, they almost ceased from their activity.

IT WAS not very difficult then for a woman in dark Persian costume to crawl close to the hedge and peer through it undetected. It was not very difficult for the two clearest, most desperate violet eyes in Asia to recognize a map—nor presently, when Dick raised it to see better, to recognize—*the* map. The Princess gasped and nearly gave herself away.

She was so astonished that she tripped and made a noise, and she was so unnerved by her discovery that she all but let herself be caught by the sentry who ran and thrust his bayonet into a place still warm from her body heat. She lay in a mud-pool, with her breath held tight, for longer than seemed possible; and when she crept away at last her knees trembled and she staggered through the darkness, all but overwhelmed.

For it is traitors who are most affected when they find themselves betrayed.

She had thought Marie Mouquin's love for the giant Andry the sole reason for her presence in Dick's camp, and she had thought the woman's seizure in front of Astrabad due to no more than Andry's wishfulness. But if a map to which only the maid, besides herself, could ever have had access was in Dick's hands, what other secrets might not be his? How was she not unarmed? What had she to bargain with, if Dick knew all already?

She hurried now. Numbness gave place to exasperation, and her quick wit goaded her to take the only line left that held out any chance of her succeeding. It was she who must succeed, not anybody else. She could not, for instance, have let Dick succeed, uninterfered with, and have trusted to his generosity to shield her afterward. It must be she who held the reins and she who doled out pardons—she who dictated terms in the end. And, as her wit returned in a hot wave while she dodged among the shadows, she thought she saw a way of stealing a march on Dick and bringing him at last to beg of her.

She blushed, all muddied and bedraggled and unseen, as she reflected how long Dick Anthony would have to beg.

She regarded her given word to Jenison, provided she thought of it at all, as subterfuge. She was thinking of nothing but the game she had to play, and as she fell panting into her tent and lay on the earth inside, she clutched at the Persian woman and held her tight, as if she could draw strength from the plump warm body.

Andry's bagpipes were still skirling, and Dick sat poring yet above his plan under a canopy that rested on smoke-blackened poles, too full of the thoughts that burn a man to endure the confines of his tent. Jenison slept, dog-weary. The men thundered songs that some one improvised to Andry's tune. The outer pickets yelled their numbers at the night.

"*No Name!*" she muttered, refusing to let the frightened Persian woman go. "He is *No Name*, is he?"

She had seen the villages along the road from Teheran aburst with enthusiasm for Dick Anthony. Before Jenison had rescued her she had heard the Persians boast. So,

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though she did not believe that the information given out would be exactly right, she nevertheless believed that Dick intended a swoop on Teheran. In Teheran was the British Minister—the man whose recognition of Dick Anthony would be enough to establish his identity and his unblemished honor. In Teheran was the only available market-place for Russian official secrets.

Her Golden Rule, that told her "Impute to others what you certainly would do yourself," assured her that Dick Anthony intended to offer those Russian plans to the British Minister in return either for forgiveness or some form of recognition. And since that map and those plans were the essence of the contemplated Russian treachery there would be no more market after that for anything that she herself could tell.

"Go! Send me Marie Mouquin!" she said grimly, and the Persian woman started as if whipped, for the words came from between thin lips, propelled by desperation.

THE woman disappeared between the tent-flap and the Princess rose, to stand waiting beside the entrance in an attitude that changed each instant as she hesitated between a choice of force or soft persuasion. Finally, pattering through the dark slush, Marie Mouquin caught her undecided and checked a little scream as she saw the Princess's face by the lantern light.

"Mother of God!" she murmured. "Are you ill?"

"No," said the Princess. "Come! Listen to me! No, don't be afraid! Come in!"

She pushed and pulled her in; then stood with her back to the entrance, holding the lantern she had snatched out of Marie's hand.

"You love, don't you?"

Marie Mouquin did not try to suppress her instinct to glance sideways. She was listening to the lilt of Andry's tune that came from the far side of the camp.

"Ah! You are lucky! You have won your love! He takes you in his strong arms, doesn't he? How many times?"

"I—what do you mean? I——"

"How did you win your love?"

"He won me! What do you mean?"

"Whose maid were you when you met him? Under whose protection? In whose pay?"

The maid shuddered at the recollection, but her eyes stared straight into the Princess', and there was creeping over her a sensation she remembered all too well—of inability to disobey—of disinclination to think for herself—of reason running away from her and leaving mental lethargy behind.

"How did you reward your love? Think! With whose property? Was that right? Was that honest? Was that likely to cause happiness? Was that well omened? Was it wise to steal to make a present to your lover? Was it grateful of you to steal those plans from me, and send them to my enemy? Yes! Your lover—your Andry MacDougal—is my enemy! But for him and his dog-watchfulness, I might have won *my* lover long ago!"

The maid shrank back from her, but the Princess held the lantern up and followed, pressing close.

"Do you know why I dare not go to Russia?"

"No," said the maid, and it was the truth.

"Do you know why I am here?"

Marie Mouquin thought she knew the answer to that. Just as Andry MacDougal would be lode enough to draw her anywhere, she had no doubt but that the Princess Olga Karageorgovich had followed Dick, and would follow him until the end. But she chose to hold her tongue for, as she thought, a picture of Dick Anthony came up before her brain—of a sad Dick Anthony, whose eyes were weary for something that she knew neither she nor the Princess could understand.

"I dare not go to Russia because Anthony has that map. I am here—to—get—the map!"

"No-no! I will not listen! I must get out of here! Let me pass!"

"It was you, Marie Mouquin, who stole that map! It was you who sent it to Andry MacDougal; he who gave it to Anthony! I am responsible for it; I am ordered to recover it. So I am here—to deal with you and your man Andry! Yes—you hear me rightly—you and your man Andry! Listen! No, listen! Andry MacDougal dies tonight, unless I get that map first and the plans that go with it!"

V

IT WAS Usbeg Ali Khan, weary of telling tales to men who would have listened eagerly to twice as many, who took upon himself to hurry the army off to bed.

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"Tomorrow a long, hard march! Battles ahead of us!" he warned, striding in and out between the fires with the lower end of a scabbard showing under his long military cape. "To bed! To sleep! Allah bless me, are ye flies, to buzz where the light is? Flies moths, or women—which?"

Constant reiteration of that reference to women brought the Princess Olga Karageorgovich to mind, and with thought of her there came uneasiness. Uneasiness, to a man of his martial type, was the same thing exactly as an inspiration to investigate. Inspiration meant prompt action.

Usbeg Ali Khan splashed hurriedly across the camp, taking no notice now of men who greeted him from under rough bough shelters or who poked their heads from under blankets to offer to march sleepless on the morrow if he would but stay and tell them another tale. His eyes were on a tent in which a light shone low, and cast an unexpected shadow. Used to the dark, he saw what the tent guards seemed to miss, a figure that slipped out of darkness and dived through the tent-flap on all fours.

As he hurried he saw the light inside begin to move, and almost as he came abreast of the tent he saw a Persian woman leave it in a hurry, running as if a ghost were after her. The light inside went out, so he knew that the tent had another occupant; she might be Princess, and she might be a substitute, but he chose to wait and see yet what the minutes might explain.

"I am not here! I am a shadow—" he growled at the guard who showed signs of wanting to speak to him. He knew what the guard would say, word for word, about Dick's orders relative to women.

Soon Marie Mouquin came, carrying a lantern. He heard her checked scream as she passed inside the tent. He saw her swung round and pushed backward, and the snatched lantern held nearly level with her eyes. And he heard words in Russian, that were enough for him. In another second he was gone, as the bats go, swift and dumb.

He loosed a horse from the long line, staked down the middle of the camp, and spurred him bareback to Dick's tent to save urgent seconds.

"*Bahadur!*" he urged, falling from the horse and stumbling forward. "Come, Come and listen! Come and see!"

"What?" demanded Dick, folding the map.

"Come! I said from the first it is foolishness to trust a woman! Come and see! Come and listen!"

Dick pocketed the map, and his face was eloquent of utter detestation of the business on which Usbeg Ali summoned him.

"If this proves a bubble, Usbeg Ali, I'll prick your pride as well!" he threatened.

"A bargain, *bahadur!*"

"Lead on!" commanded Dick.

So the two strode back through whistling darkness, sheltered from the rain under cloaks that could not hide them, for there was no other man in all Persia who could walk like Dick, nor any who could swagger more than Usbeg Ali Khan even in a hurry. They were recognizable on the instant to men so far away that only their faintest outline could be glimpsed against the light of a dull red fire. But Dick had a hand up as he came, and no one challenged or saluted him.

He passed within the circle of the guards and came to a stand six feet from the tent, on the side where a double shadow moved in time to a wavering light. He heard Russian voices, talking Russian; and not by any means for the first time he thanked the instinct which had warned him to conceal his knowledge of Russian from everybody. Not even Andry or Usbeg Ali Khan knew that he knew Russian. Had the Princess known the fact, she would surely have chosen some other tongue in which to twist her skein of intrigue while in Dick's camp.

Usbeg Ali Khan, listening with both ears closer to the tent than Dick, writhed with anxiety because he feared Dick would miss the true meaning of it all. What was an interpretation afterward from memory compared to the true tale carried by a man's own ears and understanding? He sweated with hot rage because Dick knew no Russian!

AND Dick stood still, convinced, yet quite in control of himself. He held his sword-hilt tight, as if to remind himself that he was still a gentleman although eavesdropping by a woman's tent. Word for word, threat added on to threat, persuasion piled on argument, and coaxing intertwined through all of it, he heard each word that passed.

"Andry MacDougal dies tonight," he heard, "unless I get that map and the plans that go with it!"

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"I dare not! I won't! I will warn Andree—you can not kill him then!"

"Russia has a long arm, Marie! Also—the night has eyes——"

"And ears!" thought Dick, hating himself because he had to listen. "Why doesn't Marie Mouquin call for help?" he wondered, not knowing what mental ascendancy the Princess had reasserted for the moment.

"But what will you use them for?" asked Marie, and Dick saw one-half of the moving shadow stiffen, as if the Princess felt encouraged.

"For what but to rehabilitate myself? I dare not go back without them! They would kill me if I did! Listen, woman—I do not care to rob you of your man—you may have him! I am done with you, ingrate! But are you such an ingrate that you can withhold my chance from me? Get me that map—those plans—and you shall never see nor hear from me again! I swear it!"

"But you never tell the truth!" said Marie Mouquin, and Dick smiled grimly in the dark.

"You don't believe me? Listen! Look me in the eyes! So! Now, you don't believe me? Or—do you believe me, Marie Mouquin?"

"No!" said a brave voice.

"Ingrate!" said the Princess savagely. "Then listen! It will be enough if you bring me the package sealed. You shall see me give it to a man who will deliver it leagues away to the right people. Do that, and I will call off the man who has orders to kill Andry MacDougal tonight—Marie!"

"I can not! I do not even know where it is!"

"He is reading the map—under the canopy before his tent. Oh yes he is, for I have seen him—yes, I, with these eyes tonight! He is reading what he should not read! He is reading what was meant for Russia's eyes alone! He is reading what *must not* reach the eyes of the British Government! And the price of what he is reading, Marie Mouquin, is the life of your man Andry now, tonight!"

Andry's bagpipe music that had been skirling loud and angry over all the camp ceased suddenly, as if it had been cut off sharp at its source. Nor did it resume. Its absence, and the fact that every voice in camp ceased suddenly in sympathy, made the night seem a wall of silence. Only the horses stamped at their picket-ropes, and one horse neighed like a great ghoul laughing. The voices in the tent died down, though Dick could hear whispering, and in a minute more Marie Mouquin crept from the tent stealthily, leaving the lantern behind her.

DICK watched her go, then beckoned Usbeg Ali, and the two strode off in a slightly different direction, keeping in shadow and behind the maid. Then after a moment Dick began to hurry, striding along on the arc of a short circle through the camp so fast that Usbeg Ali could not speak for trying to keep pace.

"Did you hear what was said, *bahadur?* Did you understand any of it? Or shall I tell?" he managed to gasp.

But Dick, with his eyes on the alert to pierce each shadow, did not seem to hear him. He reached his own enclosure, and passed in. He seemed surprised, though not displeased, to find Andry there waiting for him; and the fact that a miserable-looking Persian shrunk away from Andry, held in a grasp from which two men his size could never have won free, amused him.

"Already?" he asked aloud, and not a soul knew what he meant.

"Now, Usbeg Ali!"

He went through a form of listening while the Afghan told him word for word, with dozens of added words, what had transpired in the tent, and he did not even smile at the wild insertions.

"What is it, Andry?" he asked, when the Afghan had finished.

"This—" he shook his captive, and the poor wretch screamed—"mus' be a spy. He'd a knife on him—here 'tis—this. I snatched it."

"Did he try to knife you?"

"Na-na! He was waitin' crouched up close behind me i' the shadow."

"Stand him here!" commanded Dick.

The shrinking wretch was swung off his feet and planted again in front of Dick, and Dick took his elbow off the table to stare at him better and more sternly.

"Tell me!" he commanded, sitting upright suddenly and speaking with a voice that was a series of quick explosions. "Had you orders to kill this man?"

"No, no, no!" said the Persian. "None! The order was to wait, and not to kill until a word was given!"

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"What word?"

"One was to call out 'Aieeieeiee, my head, my head!"

Dick smiled.

"He would shout that from the hospital, of course?"

"Aye, from where the sick lie."

Dick smiled again.

"Andry," he ordered, "get your girl!"

Andry's jaw dropped and he hesitated in amazement.

"You'll find her behind the hedge at my back! Quick man!"

Big as a bull, and heavy for his size, Andry could move like a landslide when he chose, or Dick's order called for it. He hurled himself past Dick, and took the branch fence at a bound, turning sharp back as he landed and pouncing on somebody who squealed.

"It's her!" he gasped, more astounded than his captive.

"Bring her in!"

There was a struggle as he lifted her—a sharp smack as she slapped his face—a squeal as she was crushed into subjection in great iron arms that could have held four of her helpless. Then Andry jumped the fence again with his girl held tight against his breast, and in another moment he had set her on her feet in front of Dick.

"Wasn't there a man," asked Dick quite casually, "who went into hospital today with something unusual the matter with his head?"

Marie was inclined to pout and sulk, for it is not the acme of delight for a woman—and she in sole charge of a whole department of a camp—to be caught in the act of skulking near the commander's tent. Shame gripped her, so she began to behave like a spoiled child. But Dick's manner disarmed her before she had begun, and she found herself answering him naturally, without reserve.

"He'll recover before the morning," Dick assured her.

"I think he is very ill," said Marie.

Dick took no notice of her answer. He was staring into the fire and drumming on the table with his finger-ends, humming softly to himself.

"Send Jenison!" he ordered suddenly. "Yes, you Andry. Hand your prisoner to the guard and have him held in irons. Go and wake Jenison, and hurry!"

FOR five minutes Marie Mouquin stood beside Dick under his smoke-blackened canopy, studying his face and forgetting that she herself had been caught in the act of spying. Long ago she had ceased to wonder why Andry, and other men, loved Dick better than their lives or their own girls. But she wondered why she did not feel afraid. Andry, her own love, was a giant of strength, and of more than mere strength of muscle; but she dared slap Andry's face. She had to feel reverent to Dick, though Dick was younger than herself!

She was startled out of reverie by the approach of Jenison, screwing his face up and unscrewing it to get the sleep out of his eyes. He did not speak; he stood still in front of Dick, looking from him to Marie Mouquin and then back again.

"About the Princess," said Dick, and Jenison looked startled.

"I'm responsible!" he answered, the sleep not quite yet gone from him; he was game, even if he was only half awake.

"I know you are! She's making trouble. It has got to stop!"

Jenison began to look exceedingly uncomfortable, and Usbeg Ali Khan's white teeth displayed themselves in a wide grin of amusement. Andry clucked softly to himself. Dick waited for an answer, but Jenison was wi- and held his tongue.

"If the Princess gets what she wants," said Dick, "an' asks to be let go, will you be content to let her go? I mean, will you consider yourself absolved from the duty of protecting her?"

"Yes, if I get your meaning rightly. If there's no rider to it—if you mean exactly what you say—yes—of course yes."

"That's all," said Dick.

"No, it's not all! I've a right to know what's going on! If I'm answerable for her, I'm answerable for what you do to her!"

"I'll do nothing to her," said Dick quietly, and Jenison began to let his temper rise.

"Then, what d'you mean?" he asked with the tone of a man who would draw his sword for twopence.

Dick ignored the tone of voice completely, but answered him at once.

"Whatever is done will be done by her."

"I'll have to withdraw my consent," said Jenison. "I dare say I made a mistake, but I gave her my word that I'd protect her. My word's good."

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There was no doubt that Dick liked the man, any more than that Andry did not like him. Andry was jealous, as he was of every one who made a favorable impression on his master; he stood clucking and muttering about the weaknesses of fat men.

Dick smiled, so enigmatically that none—neither Usbeg Ali Khan, nor Andry, nor the maid, nor Jenison—knew what he would say or do.

"If she left the camp of her own free will," said Dick, "would you feel it your duty to follow her?"

"I don't know what you're driving at!" said Jenison.

"I'll tell you. Tomorrow she'll be begging us to let her go, supposing that she hasn't given us the slip in the meanwhile. Will you agree to let her go?"

"That would depend. If I thought she were being frightened away, why no, I wouldn't. I want it understood I'm her friend until she can find a better."

Dick drummed on the table again with his finger-ends, and the dancing firelight showed that there was laughter in the corners of his eyes. His mouth quivered a little, as if he had checked a grin.

"All right," he said suddenly. "The arrangement suits me. Would you like to change the guard around her tent, or anything like that?"

"What for?"

"To satisfy yourself that I do nothing to her?"

"No. Why should I?"

"You're responsible," smiled Dick.

"D'you mean to try to frighten her?" asked Jenison, looking Dick straight in the eyes; and Dick said "No."

"Then, what's it all about?"

"I wished you'd satisfy yourself no wrong was being done her, that's all."

"I remember I have your word on that," said Jenison stiffly.

"Good night," said Dick. "You may take my word for it implicitly."

Jenison stalked off.

"I'll see her in the morning, first thing," he said curtly over his shoulder.

In the space of ten short minutes he had rather lost conceit with Dick. It struck him Dick had had him called from well-earned sleep for nothing.

"LISTEN, *bahadur!* This is madness!"

Usbeg Ali Khan leaned over the table and rapped his fist on it for emphasis. His white teeth showed between his beard in what was not a smile, and the whites of his eyes gleamed savagely. Andry MacDougal took a step toward him, with his fingers spread and crooked for action, but Dick made a sign to him and he stepped back again beside his girl.

"I have told you what she said, and here is the other woman to confirm my words! Put her to the question. Make her tell what the Princess said to her! Why harbor two spies—two snakes—two ——?" He used a word that should not pass a man's lips in the presence of a woman.

"That'll do!" said Dick.

"The camp is lousy with spies!" swore Usbeg Ali, lapsing into his own tongue.

"There will be two spies less by dawn!" Dick assured him. "Go to the hospital and take a look at the man who pretends to have pains in the head. Take a few men with you, and take care that he doesn't notice that you're looking at him. I want to be certain that the man gets well away when he makes a run for it. I don't want him shot or captured. Understand?"

"*Bahadur*, give me leave to make a fire—a big one!"

"What for?" asked Dick.

"I would throw the Princess, and this woman here, and that spy in it who has a pain in his head! There would be an end of nine-tenths of our trouble!"

It was well for Usbeg Ali that he spoke in a tongue which Andry could not understand, for Andry was a literal-minded man who would have taken him in earnest; and when Andry struck a man, most often something broke. But Dick laughed.

"You have your orders," he said quietly, and the Afghan swaggered away muttering.

Then Dick turned on Marie Mouquin, and for a second she felt her heart jump to her throat, for he looked sterner than she had ever seen him. It might have been the firelight and the gloom that made his face seem so inhuman, but she trembled in her skin and even the touch of Andry's hand did not put her at her ease.

"Whose side are you on?" he asked her suddenly, and she did not know how to answer him, for she was spellbound.

"That woman's? Russia's?"

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She shook her head. Words would not come.

"Then do exactly what I say! Understand? Exactly! Go to *her* tent one hour from now. Tell her you've watched me. Tell her I'm reading what she wants. Bring her here and show her. Then offer to steal the plans. Steal them, when you see the chance. Yes, steal them. But keep her to her terms! Insist that the plans leave camp within an hour! Give her no time to make any other disposition of them. Threaten to tell me otherwise. D'you understand?"

"Yes sir."

"Then, repeat what I've told you."

Word for word she repeated his orders.

"Go and do it!"

"Yes sir."

"Good night, Andry!"

"Mr. Dicky!"

"Well?"

"Wull there be no risk o' a sentry jabbin' his bayonet into Marie?"

"No! I'll see to that."

"Gude nicht then, Mr. Dicky!"

ANDRY strode away into the night, his great feet sploshing into pools and squelching out again, marching like a dozen men. Two hundred yards from Dick's enclosure he found his bed, stowed snug beneath a tent-fly stretched over a machine-gun. Five minutes later he was snoring in it, with his wet boots on, making the most of opportunity and perfectly content to leave his girl in Dick's hands.

The minute he was gone, Dick sent his sentries all away. Nothing loath, they hurried to snuggle into blankets by the different fires that claimed them. Then Dick went inside his tent and stayed there for ten minutes.

The rain was coming down again in torrents, and the wind shrieked through the camp as if mountain furies were out hunting for lost souls; but he came out with his cloak on, and sat down beneath the fluttering canopy by a fire that spat and sputtered. He pulled out a bulky package from beneath his cloak presently—extracted a paper from it—spread it on the table—and settled down, or seemed to, to a night of study.

It is possible that he was listening as well as studying. He may have been only listening. He was certainly awake. It seemed a very long time before he arose at last and folded up the paper; and then he did a very strange thing.

He slipped the paper back into the package, and tied the package with a string. Next he put the whole into a little steel cash-box that had lain on the table under the cape of his great cloak. It was a very strong steel box that once had held the papers of a Russian regiment. He locked the cash-box, and put the key into his pocket.

Then, leaving the steel box on the table, in the full light of a lantern and the flickering fireblaze, he walked out of his enclosure, not troubling to look behind him once. He did not even turn or start when something caught in a projecting twig of his bough fence. He walked straight ahead, and was swallowed by the many-shadowed night. Men said later that he went to the horse lines and was seen there giving orders.

VI

MAIDS — since there first were maids and mistresses—have made a study of the art of small deceit, and Marie Mouquin had enjoyed so many opportunities when maid to the Princess of applying the art she learned that she had reached adeptness. She knew the Princess —knew what would arouse suspicion, what contempt, and what exasperation. Above all she knew exactly how to be convincing.

Wet to the skin and shivering, she ran through the dark to her own tent, where she took off her clothes and wrung them. A minute or two before the hour had passed she pulled on the still damp garments, and ran out into the night with all her speed to make sure she would be out of breath.

"Imbecile!" the Princess hissed at her, as she dived into the tent, under the eyes of guards whom Usbeg Ali had instructed to see nothing. "How long have you been? Where are they? Where are the plans? Give them me!"

"He reads them yet! I have watched him all this time; he sits and reads them. Can I snatch them from him? Bah! You are mad! And I am wet through! I am not afraid of you—I am afraid of him—of Anthonee—I will do no more!"

"Did you kiss your dear Andry a last farewell?" the Princess asked her sweetly. "Have you thought how he will look with a knife in his back?"

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Marie Mouquin burst out sobbing, and threw herself on her knees.

"I am afraid!" she moaned. "I am afraid! What shall I do? What can I do?"

"There is only one thing you *can* do," the Princess assured her pleasantly, prying loose the fingers that clutched at her Persian trousers.

"There is nothing I can do!" sobbed Marie. "Come with me and I will prove it to you."

"The tent is guarded," said the Princess.

"The guards are asleep."

"Are you sure?"

"I know it. They sleep leaning on their arms."

The Princess drew the tent-flap open and peered out, but all was black darkness except for the glow of a fire a hundred yards away. Against it, with his face toward it, she could see a rifleman squatted on the ground with his rifle up-ended in front of him; if he were not asleep he was imitating sleep extremely thoroughly.

"Come! Show me!"

The Princess slipped through the opening, not flinching for a second when the cold rain came driving into her face.. Marie slipped out after her, seeming to drag back, and not needing to pretend to be afraid, but after twenty yards of hurrying through whirling, whistling, wet blackness Marie gathered courage and began to lead, and presently they lay together very close to the place where the Princess had escaped a bayonet thrust not long before.

They lay for ten minutes, watching Dick Anthony; and he sat still, studying what lay before him on the table. They saw him rise—saw him lock the papers in the small steel box—and saw him walk away, leaving the steel box on the table.

"Now!" said the Princess savagely, gripping Marie Mouquin's arm with fingers that seemed to burn, so that the maid barely repressed a scream. "Now, imbecile! Go get it! Bring that box and save your man!"

MARIE made a dash for it, for the Princess might forestall her otherwise, and she was afraid too that she might laugh unless action brought relief. Hysterical excitement had her in its grip. Her dress caught in a twig and tore; she heard the Princess curse her in fierce whispers; but she hurried—on through the gap in the fence through which Dick Anthony had passed—straight past the fire, to the table—grabbed the box, and ran!

She ran as she had never moved in all her life—as if grim death himself were after her—back by the way she came, past the Princess, on into the night.

"Stop!" the Princess ordered her. "Give it me!"

But Marie Mouquin hurried on, and the Princess had to follow. The direction she took was toward the hospital where her own tent stood not far from the other women's. The cold rain beat in her face, and the wind snatched away her breath; there was a stitch in her side that felt like the dagger meant for Andry, and the shoes chafed her stockingless feet until she seemed to run on spikes. But she fled like a ghost, afraid—afraid that the Princess would discover she was laughing!

She took a header into her own tent, and fell prone on the rough bough bed, clutching at the blankets and biting them. The Princess burst in after her, too out of breath to speak. She sprang on Marie, clutched her neck, and groped for the box with her other hand.

So desire to laugh died out of Marie Mouquin to give place to desperation. She fought for a minute like a tiger-cat. She struck the wrist that tried to hold her, bruising it with the edge of the steel box. What she fought for was breath—time to get her breath, and name her terms.

"Listen!" she hissed, throwing the Princess free and gasping as she stared through the dark to guess her enemy's next move. The pains each woman took to fight in silence made the tension doubly terrible.

"You said—" Marie gasped so that her words were like explosions, and the Princess shuddered at the risk of being overheard—"you would be satisfied—if this—if these papers—go away—by messenger. Who is your messenger?"

"Give me the box! I will give it him!"

"No! No! No! I will not! I will give it to your messenger. I—with my own hands—I will give it him! I will not have this in camp—a minute! It shall not be found on you or on me! It must be sent away—at once!"

"Imbecile! Ingrate! I tell you I will send it away at once!"

"I don't believe you! I have heard too many lies! Move toward me and I scream!

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Yes—I will scream! I will warn Anthonee! I will tell him all! Then you will not kill my man, and will have no plans!"

There were beginning to be symptoms of hysterics that were recognizable even in the darkness of that tent, with the rain drumming on the outside to drown all minor sounds. And the Princess knew enough of her maid to know when her ultimatum had been reached.

"Have it your own way!" she panted. "Find me the man who has a bad head—Hussein Khalil—find him!"

"Stand back, then! No—out of the tent! Outside with you!"

The Princess walked out, seeing she had no alternative, and followed Marie through the mud and rain at what the maid considered a safe distance.

"There is your man!" said Marie suddenly, pointing to an open-sided hut of boughs and mud, within the deeper gloom of which a man swore horribly at dripping water. "Go and give him directions! I wait here."

So the Princess went ahead, and what she said inside the hut was whispered too low for Marie to overhear, though she tried her best. In about a minute the Princess and her man came out together, the man still swearing at the rain. It was much too dark for any one to recognize them. They both approached Marie, but she stepped backward.

"No!" she commanded, raising her voice louder than was comfortable for either of the other two. "One at a time!"

"Let me kill her!" swore the man in Persian.

"No, no, she will scream!"

"If you have given him his orders," said Marie, "let him come alone. Go you away—back to my tent!"

TREMBLING with fury, for obedience was not her favorite vice, fiercely though she exacted it from others, the Princess did as ordered. Then the man approached Marie, and she held the box out to him. He snatched it and made a swipe at her with his closed fist, but she stepped back and he missed her. With an oath that only filthy lips could mouth, he ran then for the horse lines and found his way there in the dark with a speed and accuracy that were proof of preparation.

He seemed surprised to find the end horse ready saddled and bridled, but he did not stop to quarrel with his luck, nor to notice that the next horse happened to be ready too. He loosed the end horse, led him a little way, and mounted carefully, then legged him forward through the darkness to the one main entrance that was practicable after dark. Being one of the outer line of guards when not in hospital, he knew the password of the night before, and proposed to take a chance on Dick's not having changed it.

"Halt!" came an order as he reached the narrow camp end of the exit. So he halted.

"Who are you?" asked somebody in Persian, in a voice that seemed husky from the chilly dampness.

"I ride according to instructions. Let me by!"

"Have you the password?"

"Surely."

"Give it!"

"Freedom!" he replied in English.

"Pass, then. Go your way!"

He rode on in silence, and did not know that two men talked about him from behind.

"Are you sure you warned *all* the pickets to let him by whatever word he gives?" asked Dick.

"Aye, *bahadur*," said Usbeg Ali. "I attended to it. I did more. The men he will pass are the men I took to the hospital to have a good look at him."

"Very well," said Dick. "I'll wait here. Go on ahead, keeping behind that man. Warn them in case a woman follows to let her through too—*and watch which way she goes! I want her tracked!*"

"*Bahadur*——"

Usbeg Ali's face was close to Dick's; he laid a hand on Dick's arm, and shook it fiercely.

"Do better than that! If she makes a bolt for it—and what else *can* she do—let them shoot her! None will know! They can drag her body into the jungle and leave it there—the jackals will eat it in a few hours! Let me order them!"

"No!" said Dick.

"But why? Why not?"

Suddenly Dick took him by the throat and shook him till his eyes saw nothing but a streak of fire that zigzagged and reversed.

"Because, you blood-thirsty villain, she's a woman! Because — incidentally — I've given my word. Because you've got your orders! Go and obey!"

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He hurled the Afghan backward in the direction he had ordered him to take; and then, as if no such trivial incident could claim room in his memory, he started to pace toward the camp slowly, with his arms behind him, pausing every little while to listen.

He was not smiling, but on the other hand there was no trace of anger on his face. Usbeg Ali Khan, swaggering in the opposite direction, muttering blasphemies to himself, would have been amazed and might have learned another lesson could he have met Dick face to face that minute; the swash-buckling second-in-command imagined Dick was swearing too and smoothing ruffled feathers!

IN TEN minutes' time, after pacing the distance twice between the exit and the nearest tents, Dick heard another horse, and this one was not coming at a walking gait. He had just time to step into a shadow before a horse, whose white foreleg he recognized, came cantering toward him and he saw go by, astride of a high-built Cossack saddle, none other than the Princess Olga Karageorgovich. She was looking straight ahead of her, and she did not see him, nor suspect his presence.

He waited and listened. He heard her horse increase the pace from a canter to a gallop—heard him leap the stream lower down where it crossed the trail—and then heard him settle down to do his best. But no man challenged, and no shot was fired. Usbeg Ali had obeyed.

He stood in a brown study, wondering whether that was the last he would ever see of the sole originator of his chain of undeserved misfortune. For the moment his thoughts were away from the campaign, wandering in channels that were personal; they were brought back quickly by a woman's scream from the center of the camp and the shouts of a hundred men who seemed to awake at once and yell the alarm because they did not know what else to do.

Dick bent his head and hurried, forcing his way by sheer strength through crowds who pressed, only half awake, to see what the matter might be. His own stern orders had made women's screams a matter of life and death in that camp, and where not one man would have troubled himself about a fight, or have crossed the camp to prevent an ordinary murder, the whole camp awoke and was divided now between curiosity and caution—by the need of choosing whether to interfere or play for safety by remaining still.

Dick's method and Andry's were widely different, and yet they met at the same instant at the end of the mid-camp horse-lines. Andry had hewn himself a passage through the swarm big-bearwise, reckless of life and limb, his own or others', so that he reached the author of the scream. As he sprang from his bed beneath the machine-gun he had recognized it, and his own answering roar was far more terrible because it presaged wrath to come, whereas the scream was unmistakably the result of something done and over with.

His head crashed into Dick's as the two stooped down opposite each other above the body of Andry's girl, and they both reeled back, for they were strong men and their heads hard in proportion. Blinking through a million red stars each recognized the other, and Dick drew back to let Andry have his right.

"If she can speak, ask her what happened," he ordered.

"Man—she's babblin' French—I dinna understan'. Come an' listen!"

So Dick bent over her and made out little by little while Andry stanched a knife-wound in her shoulder how the Princess had run for the horse lines and the maid had followed to prevent her from she did not know what new outrage. Marie had stopped when she saw what the plan was, for she could imagine nothing more desirable than the Princess's escape; but the Princess had mounted and then ridden the horse straight at her, so swiftly and unexpectedly that she had had no time to dodge.

The impact of the horse's shoulder sent her stumbling backward—the Princess followed—drove a knife into her—and cantered off.

"Did she say nothing?" Dick asked her.

"*Rien du tout!*"

"Why didn't you scream the moment you were stabbed?"

"Your orders! Some man might have got the blame before I could explain! And then—and then it hurt too badly—and she was gone now—and I *must* scream—and I screamed!"

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"Damn!" muttered Dick.

Andry had the dress wrenched from the white round shoulder and was sucking at the wound, spitting out mouthfuls of good blood, until Dick laughed at him.

"Put something on to stop the bleeding!" he ordered. "Then run and get some women."

SO ANDRY listened to reason, and within ten minutes Marie Mouquin lay in the arms of women on whom she had been instrumental in conferring privileges that none of their own nation had so much as dreamed of for them. Then Andry forgot reason and was swayed by the passion for revenge, that was the curse of his wild Highlands for so many centuries; it began to boil in him and, out of all proportion to Marie Mouquin's wound and his regard for her, loomed the mask of the god of vengeance that is all empty nothingness but looks like the face of a gentleman in front.

Marie Mouquin's blood was on his lips yet as he returned from the hospital; and he stood by Dick's fire trembling in atavistic savagery, no longer the faithful, decent fighting man, but an ugly, blood-beastly animal whose gray eyes glinted in the firelight and whose lumpy muscles played and twitched beneath his skin.

"Did she tell ye, Mr. Dicky, where that —— went?" he demanded, and he used a word that a prophet had once used to Jezebel, with provocation that is not recorded to have been much worse.

"No."

"Wull—that's a peety, f'r I'm off tae find her, an' I'll no come back until her neck is snappit 'tween these fingers! Aye! I'll track her doon! I've come tae bid ye good-by until I've done it, an' tae ask a favor of ye."

"What favor?"

"Twenty or thir-r-r-rty men!"

"We strike camp at dawn, Andry."

"Strike awa'! I ken naethin' tae prevent ye!"

"Marie Mouquin is not very seriously hurt. She can be carried with the column, or be left behind with some women and a guard—cached in fact."

"Aye. An' of the two, I'd raither see her carried wi' the column."

"Please yourself, Andry, on that point, or please her. But—" Dick leaned forward and looked very hard at him—"you come with us, my man!"

"Na-na!"

Andry shook his head violently, as if to get blood out of his eyes, and spat to get real blood from his mouth. He was ready to voice and do mutiny, to sacrifice his loyalty to Dick, and to make a beast of himself for the sake of what seemed honor at the moment.

Dick had an answer on his lips, but at that moment Jenison drew near in a hurry and swore loud at the guard who would not let him pass. He ran through the opening in the fence when Dick ordered him admitted, and wasted no time on preliminary courtesies or beating about the bush.

"Where's the Princess?"

"Gone," said Dick.

"How? When? In which direction?"

"On a stolen horse, with other stolen property of mine, after doing her best to murder Marie Mouquin," Dick told him quietly.

"D'you suppose I had a hand in it?" asked Jenison.

"I know you hadn't."

"I'm glad of that."

"At the same time," said Dick, "it's possible you may feel at a disadvantage. Hadn't you some agreement with her that you proposed to turn to account?"

"What of it?"

"If you'd rather take back your promise to me you may."

"Wouldn't think of it!" said Jenison. He paused a moment, eying Dick's face so narrowly that Andry began to forget a little of his rage and cluck jealously. "But —she was one of my party all right, and if she's gone off with any of your property I'm answerable for it. I'll take some men and do what I can to get whatever it is back. What did she get away with?"

"A steel cash-box."

"Anything in it?"

"Papers."

"Of importance?"

Dick said nothing; he was looking at Andry.

THE big man was trembling again with rage and excitement; in the light cast by the fire his face was horrible, for his teeth were exposed in a devil's grin and his eyes blazed out of a maze of wrinkles. His fists were knotted up

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like enormous, hairy clubs, but he opened one of them and laid it on Jenison's shoulder with a grip that made the American shrink back and wince.

"Aye! Tak' twenty o' y'r ain men, an' come wi' me! Mr. Dicky'll no let me hae a few men, but y're a man o' per-r-r-spicas-s-sity, an' ye'll save the day, I ken. Come alang! We'll catch her, an' I'll kill her! Ye may have whatever ye find on her, an' welcome, when I've torn her thrapple oot!"

It seemed that Andry was correct when he dubbed this Jenison a man of "perspicacity." The American looked once at him, and once at Dick, and understood. Also he remembered the big man's childish jealousy. And he recalled that he looked fattest when standing sideways. So that the critic might have a better view of a growing paunch, he turned sideways to Andry and half faced Dick.

"I'll let MacDougal have twenty of my men to hunt with," he said without a vestige of a smile, "provided you'll give me his place. I mean I should expect to be third in command, and wait on you as well. He can have all my men on those terms."

Dick looked pleased, but did not look at Andry. He seemed to be considering the offer. But suddenly a shadow warned him, and a sense that is not classified but that is much surer than any of the five men recognize by name. He sprang to his feet, upsetting the table, and saved Jenison by a fraction of a second.

Andry's fist, knotted again like an iron club, ascended, whirled once and descended in the general direction of his would-be rival's head. Jenison reeled away from the impact of Dick's body. And Dick's forearm took the full weight of the blow. He winced under it and staggered backward into the fire.

It was Andry who dragged him out again, plunging in and standing on the coals until his boots were a scorched offense. It was Andry—huge, ungainly Andry of the child's heart—who seized his arm and kissed it—who knelt beside him, sobbing, begging for forgiveness, swearing he would never move an inch away from Dick, and offering his eye as a mark for Dick's fist in return.

"Laddie! Laddie! Help y'r sel'! Smite! Smite here! Laddie, I was fey—dementit! I didna ken what I was doin'. I meant tae smite yon Yankee!"

"Beg his pardon then!" commanded Dick. "Get up and beg his pardon!"

Andry demurred, for there are limits to the amount of humble pie a man will eat. He would have let Dick walk on him, but the American was different.

"Beg his pardon or get out of camp!"

Andry arose, with legs that no longer trembled but that were weak with the lees of rage. He looked at Dick and read inflexibility. He looked at the American and read humor wrestling to hide itself. Deep answered deep.

"I'm glad I didna swat ye," he said meekly. "F'r ye're a fa tmon. Ye'd ha' gane off pop! An' that wouldna' du because Mr. Dicky seems tae want ye, though *why* he wants ye an' what he'll du wi' ye I dinna ken. Ye're tae conseeder y'rsel' apologized tae."

"Do you accept it?" asked Dick.

"Yes," said Jenison. "I'm satisfied if you are."

"Ye'd better be!" grinned Andry. "Ye ken a fat mon has nae muckle chance agin' a mon like me!"

"Get to your gun!" commanded Dick, and Andry went.

VII

THE peaks on every hand were being tinted by the earliest red rays of dawn, heralding a day of downpours, when Dick turned to order the first trumpet blown that should announce the start of his raid into Russia. He stopped with the word on his lips, for at that instant there was a commotion down at the main entrance. Two dismounted scouts were brought in, dead dog-weary, and hurried along to where he stood by Jenison, Usbeg Ali Khan and Andry.

"Which way did she go?" Dick asked, for there was only one question uppermost in his mind; and though Andry certainly did not understand his words, for he spoke Persian, all three leaned forward to catch the answer or its import; all three were at one with Dick in fearing nothing but the Princess, and in attaching utmost importance to her whereabouts.

"To the west," one man answered, hawking to get the dryness from his throat.

Dick offered him a drink from his own water-gourd, and the fellow let about three quarts go gurgling down his gullet, while his companion watched jealously.

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"To the west? How d'you know? Do you know where the west lies?"

The man was standing with his back to the rising sun, so he nodded in the direction that he faced. Usbeg Ali Khan swore darkly in his beard at that, Jenison looked puzzled, and Andry incredulous.

"To the west! She rode down to the plain through the forest at a speed that frightened even me who am no scareling. He who rode ahead of her with the stolen box waited for her after a while, and I heard her call to him to bring the box to her, but he refused. Then I settled down to ride hard, for she took the lead, he following, and the pace was of the kind that kills. Both knew well that I followed, for the thunder of my horse was like a landslide coming after them.

"It was black dark after a while, for great trees overhung the trail, and soon she lost her way; but she galloped on until at last we came to an end of forest at the bottom of the foothills. Then I saw where I could spare my horse, and make believe to cease from following, for I know the trails of these forests well; that track makes a very wide detour at that point, curving back again to a point not ten feet lower down; it curls to avoid a great sheer rock and a ravine. And I, leaving my horse behind, lay on the rock and waited while they galloped on.

"Soon they galloped around the curve and came below me, I holding my breath. She stopped under the rock and called to him. He had galloped past, but he reined his horse and turned. She told him her girth was loose and the saddle like to slip round under the horse's belly. She bade him dismount and alter it. He obeyed, as it seemed to me unwillingly, keeping the steel box in his hand until he reached her horse, and then setting it on the ground between his feet while he took her girth-strap in his teeth.

"Then being very close, *bahadur*, and above her, I saw her draw a knife and drive it—so—down into his shoulder behind the collar-bone. He died without a groan, and she dismounted. I heard her chuckle. I saw her pick up the box. And I heard her try to break it by beating it against the rock whereon I lay. But it was a stout box and she failed.

"Then she searched the corpse and found a pistol and some money, taking both. I lay still and wondered whether your excellency would be satisfied and would reward me if I rolled a great stone on her; but while I lay wondering she was already on the horse again and off, due westward along the plain. I followed at a distance lest she hear the drumming of my horse's feet, and after a while I met this man. We two came back together. Let him speak."

"Speak!" commanded Dick, and the second fellow cleared his throat.

"*Bahadur*, I am of the scouts who set out yesterday at dawn. I was made to memorize my message, lest I be captured and my message fall into wrong hands. Last night between the first and second hours of the night, as we turned to advance northward, having completed our western course without adventure of any kind, we came unexpectedly on men who seemed to us also to be scouts, riding toward us. They were Russian—Cossacks. The roads are worse than none, and the lay of the land is like the floor of the Pit, so there was no difficulty in escaping notice. The men rode on ignorant of our presence and bivouacked a little later among trees."

"How far from here?" demanded Dick.

"A long march. As far as a good horse—my horse—can gallop between midnight and the dawn."

"Continue."

"Three of our men who are able to speak Russian, including myself, were ordered to crawl close to them and listen; and as we lay there listening, *bahadur*, we recognized men who but a day or two ago were in this camp; doubtless they have reported the word given out that we will march eastward. I say doubtless, for it is evident that these men are incautious; they behave as men who expect to catch up with a rearguard, and not at all as men who need beware of an advancing enemy."

"How many were they?" Dick demanded.

"Five officers and fifty men."

"Continue."

"As I lay, *bahadur*, I heard the senior officer warn the others and the men that they must look out for the Princess, for she had sent word by a spy she might be coming and with information of importance. I heard laughter then that did not sound respectful, as men laugh at a champion who has lost at last. I heard, too, conversation that hinted at a very large force not far behind them, and an officer remarked how excellent it was that there were no infantry to

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delay the march. They spoke of ten thousand men, all cavalry."

"You have my leave to go," said Dick, and the two departed to get food.

Then Dick turned to the three beside him and gave them an inkling of the swift deductions passing through his mind.

"Whether or no the Princess knew before last night that those plans were in my possession," he said, "I suspect that the Russian government knew that they were missing not very long after I received them. They must have changed their plan at once, and have changed it again after the destruction of their fleet.

"Their main plan now is likely to be what it was originally; this force of ten thousand —or whatever the number may be—is for our express benefit, to take us in the rear; the half million will swoop down on the east side of the Caspian as arranged, and we're to be caught between the upper grindstone and the nether."

"Bright lookout!" said Jenison.

"A chance for gentlemen to die like gentlemen!" said Usbeg Ali Khan.

Andry said nothing. He was watching Dick's face, knowing as always that the child is father to the man. The boy Dick had always set his jaw in just that way when new problems were presented and a new tangle must be straightened out.

"You understand, of course—" Dick was talking to himself, in English; he seemed unconscious of the others' presence—"these ten thousand are marching in strict secrecy. Russia dare not send troops openly down the west side; it would open England's eyes too soon. They can not be many more than ten thousand, because all the big divisions must be wanted for the war with Austria and Germany. The main force ready for the swoop on Persia is still hidden to the east of the Caspian, if it has not started southward yet——"

HE TURNED to look for the trumpeter, and saw him waiting patiently ten feet away.

"Sound the advance!" he ordered. "Usbeg Ali Khan, take the lead! Capture their advanced scouts if you can! But push on fast and get in touch! Then try to look like a rear-guard—do you understand?"

"I will prove I understand!"

"Then lead off with all the mounted men. Mr. Jenison!"

"Yes."

"Get your guns moving, please! The thing I want most is speed just at this juncture. I want you to follow me so fast that by the time I've found a suitable position you'll be near enough to take advantage of of it. Andry!"

"Aye!"

"Send your machine-gun along with Jenison. Bring along the infantry. I've a notion they'll need stiffening for the fight that's coming; your pipes'll do more good than the machine-gun if the enemy looks too strong for us!"

"And Marie?"

"What about her?"

"Aye! What aboot her?"

For a minute they faced each other while Dick's thoughts flashed from point to point of his plan. He seemed to have forgotten Marie altogether.

"Ye said I might do as I pleased wi' her, carry her alang or leave her wi' a guard."

"Well? Why don't you?"

"Verra gude! I'll bring her wi' the innnnfantry!"

Andry raced like a runaway herd of buffaloes in the direction of the hospital, where the wounded lay all ready on bough litters. In Persia, today as a thousand years ago, the wounded do not relish being left at the mercy either of the enemy or of the lawless of their own land, and the big Scotsman found himself received with more acclamation than he cared for.

"I'm no' y'r Antie Jane!" he told them. "Ye'd ha' stayed here an' be domned tae the lot o' ye, but f'r this gir-r-r-rl o' mine!"

And not understanding one word of what he said they cheered him again and again, until he had maneuvered them into the middle of his infantry brigade.

Then when he knew that his Marie was safe enough for the present, he got to the head of his men. His pipes went up over his shoulder, and "Bonnie George Campbell" skirled out of the chanter until the forest shook to the tramp of men who never knew how to march in time or do anything together until Dick and he had come to show them.

Ahead of him the guns jerked and jolted, reeled and rolled, crashed and jingled down hill, braked and urged alternately by sweating men, half crazy under the goad of Jenison.

Ahead of all—away and away ahead—

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Usbeg Ali and his men careered like the smoke of a forest fire, in a wide half-circle with its ends advanced. Behind Andry's infantry there trudged a few hundred bearers and some Russian mules, each laden to the limit with provisions for the fighting men.

And somewhere between Usbeg Ali Khan and Andry's infantry, alone but for three gallopers, Dick Anthony sent his horse up shoulder after shoulder of bold hill, studying the lay of the land and searching for a battle-field that suited him. Time and again he picked out a spot, only to reject it on second or third consideration; time and again he considered and rejected points of vantage pointed out by some man left behind by Usbeg Ali for the purpose.

It was four in the afternoon of a squashy rain-swept day before Usbeg Ali Khan sent word back that the enemy were now in touch, and that their scouts had escaped to give the warning. It was half-past four when Dick found a gorge between two hills that seemed to suit his purpose. And it was four forty-five exactly, by Dick's watch, when a man came galloping from Jenison's command to say that the guns were stuck fast in the mud and could not budge another centimeter.

"Tell Jenison I've got to have 'em here!" said Dick. "Tell him there's no alternative!"

VIII

DICK did good choosing when he picked Usbeg Ali Khan to fight a pretended rear-guard action. The Russians seemed inclined at first to let him be; they were tired, and their horses more so; the prospect that appealed to them best was a good supper, a sleep by hot campfires, and a furious pursuit at dawn. Usbeg Ali Khan sent word back by galloper to Dick that such seemed their intention.

"Sting them into action, then!" Dick answered, scrawling the words across the face of Usbeg Ali's note.

So Usbeg Ali stung them. His fierce riders swept down through the rain on Russians who were gathering fuel, and cut off others who were riding down to water horses. In an hour he had captured a hundred remounts, that would be fresh again and up to work by dawn. He sent them back to Dick.

Others of Usbeg Ali's men, taking advantage of every piece of cover of whatever kind, crept close to the Russians to count them and discover what guns they had.

"About ten thousand," was the word that Usbeg Ali sent to Dick before dark, "and ten machine-guns. No artillery."

"Engage!" commanded Dick. "But be a rear-guard!"

Trust the Afghan! Trust him to neglect no tiniest detail of deceit! He built a bivouac—lit the fires and let them die—trampled the mud until the stream-banks looked like fords where a brigade had crossed; and he sent a stout good man to let himself be captured.

"Dee-k-Anthonee is in full retreat," this man admitted. "His wagon-wheels and gun-wheels are hub-deep in mud. He heard of you, and rode to attack—then heard how many you are and fled. We mounted men were told to protect his rear for long enough to let him dig the wheels out."

"Protecting Dick's rear" seemed to include, however, the most desperate expedients known to war. Night closed in early, mingled with sweeping rain, and the whole countryside was shut in gloom an hour before the sun's time to dip under the horizon. Out of the gloom and the murk swept little knots of reckless warriors, with the strangest war-cry on their lips that ever a Persian battle-field had heard.

"*No name!*" they yelled at the Cossacks; and the yelling of it seemed to give them superhuman skill, or luck, or courage, or all three. Cossacks make good winners; but when they lose the first few rounds they lose heart as well, and sulk or run. It was only a very little while after dark shut down before Usbeg Ali had established such a state of mind in the Russian force that its commander had no choice; he must attack or else retire, and he did not dare retire. If he retired he might lose Dick Anthony, and the credit of taking him dead or alive.

His scouts gave him a lot of information, and no doubt he had a military map, for long ago the Russians mapped out every inch of land they covet, from Constantinople to Bengal. By that time he had five prisoners; and they all vowed that Dick's force was small as well as in difficulties.

"His men are deserting to the southward," said each prisoner; for Usbeg Ali Khan had cautioned all of them before the fighting became serious.

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THE Russians were on low land, in a position that could not very well be worse; to storm higher land, even in black darkness, seemed better by a long way than to wait for demoralization to get foothold and increase. And if there is one time better than another for a superior force to attack, and keep on attacking, it is when the enemy's men are reported to be deserting and the enemy is bogged hub-deep.

"Forward!" was the order.

Half of the men were ordered to dismount and fight on foot, with a screen of cavalry on either flank to guard against surprise, and the machine-guns were pushed forward, spaced apart at intervals but with orders to concentrate their fire the minute a considerable body of the enemy was sighted. It was only a very little while now before Usbeg Ali was compelled to draw off; but he drew off over the ground he had prepared, and the Russians were convinced Dick Anthony had just struck camp and was in full flight. They pressed forward without more caution than was forced on them by Usbeg Ali's men.

Behind them they left a commissariat train that was generously large and scandalously undefended. Two or three hundred men were drawn around it in a spaced-out line, and Usbeg Ali had to bridle his fierce riders sternly once they had discovered that fact.

"But the loot, *bahadur!*" they insisted.

"By the Blood of God!" he thundered. "Are my orders questioned? Is there any who refuse to obey? Are ye thieves, or fighting-men?"

So, in fear of him, they refrained from circling around the Russian flank in force and plundering the camp.

To Dick Anthony Usbeg Ali wrote—

Their rear is the place to smite, as one smites oxen on the rump!

But Dick wrote back—

Send ten men in a hurry with orders to find the telegraph wire and cut it in their rear.

Dick was having no picnic party. The hillsides he had chosen to defend were sticky and slippery at once. In the pitchy blackness whole companies would lose their way and cross the path of other companies that were marking time, bewildered, until his whole command seemed but a milling mess of wet and weary humans who needed a nurse rather than a general.

So Dick turned nurse, and where a lesser man would have shown exasperation, or at best would have tried to roar and bellow understanding into men who could not see, he called on his fund of patience and good humor. He seemed to see grim humor in it all; jokes came from his lips, where men expected reprimands, and, as seemed his uncanny habit, he was here, there, and everywhere apparently at once, always knowing where the north was as if he had a compass in his head.

He found Jenison laboring with the guns like a Titan, not wasting his own small strength, nor rushing about too much, but doing a decent fellow's best to lend his men courage. Dick called him away, and left the guns leaderless for twenty minutes.

He showed Jenison exactly where the guns were to be when the fight began in earnest. He gave him a line two hundred yards long by exact measure.

"When the fighting starts there'll be plenty of light to see by," Dick said. "There'll be bursting shells, and the flash of rifle fire. So pick your own marks and measure the range exactly."

He left six men with Jenison to help him, and then rode back to the guns. He was no gunner; he knew no more of guns than a man may learn who has ambition to be a soldier and would qualify himself for whatever may eventuate. Nor was he an engineer. He could see in the dark no farther than any of his own men, and physically he made no material addition to a team of men and horses.

But when he urged, the guns came forward. When he laughed, men's tempers seemed to die as their spirits rose. He was the same Dick Anthony of Arran who had led the lower school in the old days and ended bullying — the same Dick Anthony who knew what fear and discouragement were, and how to conquer them in himself and others. His voice, ringing through the night, worked greater wonders than the rain that drove into the oncoming Cossacks' faces and dampened their ardor until their numbers no longer gave them an advantage.

IN AN hour, while Usbeg Ali stung the Cossacks again and again to hamper their advance, Dick had the guns on a hill-brow. In an hour more he

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had placed them, and had built protection for the gunners. In another hour Jenison was back in charge of them, with the ranges memorized. Dick left him explaining to his men.

"Now mark! Five thousand yards is exactly at the broad stream, where the nine big trees stand in a line. Wait for a flash of lightning. There! See it? Six thousand's an easy one to remember too. At the next flash look for a——"

Dick left him, satisfied. He rode along the whole long front now, past wet companies who marked time to the tune of Andry's skirling pipes, shoulder to shoulder lest they lose one another in the dark. He led them forward a quarter of a mile.

Uninvited, Jenison tried a shot then at the five-thousand-yard mark, and the shell burst nearly at the foot of the marker trees. Its flash betrayed the Russian line, that seemed to hesitate on the far side of the stream. Ten minutes later Usbeg Ali sent word back that the Russians seemed disposed again to wait for dawn.

"Sting them hard!" commanded Dick, scrawling across the written note in the same bold hand.

Strict obedience was the key-note to Usbeg Ali's behavior that night. He had lost but few men, owing to the darkness and the boldness of his plan, so his men were full of fight. He led them back over the stream, and rode a charge full pelt at the Russian center, bursting through the hesitating ranks of the advance guard, wheeling, and charging back again, with a loss so slight that it amazed himself.

The Russian advance fell back, and machine-guns began to stutter at the gloom; but the rain proved better than an earthwork to screen Usbeg Ali's men and the hail of bullets mowed down grass instead of horses.

The flash of the machine-guns gave Jenison the range, and he and his men opened in earnest with the whole battery, not hitting much but letting the Russians know that the guns were on high ground for a certainty and this was battle, not pursuit.

Then Dick took one-fifth of the infantry, and left the rest in Andry's charge.

"See they don't shoot us from behind, Andry," he ordered. "Keep 'em steady, for me to fall back on when the time comes, and send me up reinforcements a few at a time—say fifty at a time—when I send word. Send fifty men every ten minutes from the time when I order the first half-company up!"

"Aye, aye!" said Andry, folding away his pipes; and as Dick advanced the big man started to walk up and down, up and down in front of the reserves, talking broad Scots to them that they did not understand at all, but that brought them a world of comfort.

"It was Bobbie Burrrrns," he told them, "who said 'A man's a man f'r a' that.' But, marrrk ye, he said naethin' aboot Roosians, and Roosians are not men at a'; they're reptiles! Noah had two o' them in the Arrrk, and they were verra proleefic! Tonight is the occasion when the reptiles meet their Waterloo, an' the water that's fa'in doon fra heaven is symbolical o' the firrrst half o' what is due them!"

He joked, as his ancestors had done before him, ponderously, and he was at no pains to translate any of his words into a language they could understand. But within ten minutes he had them all singing, and when the first volley ripped out from Dick's advanced extended line he had some difficulty in restraining them; they wanted to surge forward and join in. From then, on through the night, his task was mainly one of keeping the brakes on hard, and there were times when he had to use his fists and the flat of a wooden slat to do it.

DICK'S plan shaped itself out of chaos as the night wore on and the storm continued. He let Usbeg Ali rest his men now, setting them to guard his flanks while he attacked. The guns under Jenison pounded the oncoming Russians until there was no choice left the Russian commander but to try to take them; and Dick fell back slowly toward them, growing every minute stronger as the reinforcements reached him from the rear and putting up a stronger resistance.

Now the firing lines were well defined by the blaze of rifles and the hell-fire sputtering of machine-guns that sought for a human target but could find none. A few of Dick's men fell, but not enough to sap the courage of the rest and not nearly enough to counteract the dribbling supply of reinforcements; and the machine-guns proved an easy mark as they blazed into the gloom.

Soon the Russian advance was checked, facing the guns that pounded them from a hill three thousand yards away. The Rus-

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sian commander sent two thousand mounted men on the right flank, to turn what he imagined was Dick's left, and Usbeg Ali Khan reported the new move to Dick, stirring his own men meanwhile to new effort.

That was Dick's cue. He sent word at once to Andry, and the big man came hurrying, striding through the dark like the trunk of a tree on legs.

"Take command of these men now, Andry. I'll take over yours. Hold this position. If you must retire, fall back as slowly as you can toward the guns."

"Aye, aye!" said Andry, and he began that minute to insinuate himself among the Persians, until he was part of their firing line and in control of it without their noticing the change. In the heat of an action, when men squint down hot rifle-barrels at the flash of an oncoming foe, a change of commanders is not so noticeable as when it takes place on parade.

Dick rode headlong to the main body of infantry that Andry had just left, and reached them in time to stop a rush toward the front. They were chafing at inaction and disgusted with the task of lying still in the rain without appreciable return. But now Dick gave them more to think about than they had looked for. He made them wheel so that they changed front in black darkness, through which each had to feel his neighbor since he could not see him; he sent them forward, into deeper darkness yet, abreast, in touch, and silent. The far end of the line could hear his orders, but there was no light to see by since no enemy was firing in their front; Dick kept their whole attention fixed on preserving the alignment.

Proof that his own thoughts were occupied with something else as well was the perfect working of his plan. A hell of rifle-fire burst out on his right front, as the Cossacks dismounted to blaze at Usbeg Ali. The Afghan sent a man back for orders; Dick ordered a retreat at top speed.

Back came Usbeg Ali's men, spurring like the wind. A volley followed them, and then the Cossacks mounted to pursue them. They came on, hell-bent-for-leather, to be met at a hundred yards' range by a volley that screeched into them and by its very impact stunned them. They reeled, and wheeled, and fled!

Tentatively, cautiously, Dick followed, until his left was all infantry, stretched out in one long line. In the center, now, was his cavalry under Usbeg Ali Khan, and Andry was on the right. From behind on the hill the shrapnel belched and burst, and the flame from the guns, and the lightning seemed to show the Russians a clear road, or nearly clear road, to their capture. There was only Andry in the way, and the volume of fire from Andry's men betrayed his numerical weakness.

The Russian machine-guns were ordered to concentrate on Andry's men, while the Russian commander tried a turning movement, over ground he had studied only from a map. It was a move that was intended to be desperate—that must certainly be costly—that had to be made in column for the sake of speed. He marched a full half of his men, dismounted, in a column aimed for Andry and the guns beyond him.

Dick ordered Usbeg Ali out of the way then. The Afghan led his men in a half-circle until they were once more on Dick's far left. Dick swung his whole command again, and pushed it forward until the guns and Andry were on his right and the Russians marched across his front. Usbeg Ali galloped up to him in the minute when the new maneuver was accomplished, and he gave the order then which was the climax of his tactics.

"The minute I open fire, Usbeg Ali, charge home and strike for the Russian rear. They're headed for the guns; the guns are the bait. I want them pushed past the guns—hurled past them! I want them pushed forward into Persia. Not one of them must get back into Russia by the way he came. Don't waste time looting their camp; it's ours in any event; drive them! Just drive them past the guns!"

Dick opened fire at about eight hundred yards' range on the Russian column, and it squirmed on itself like a snake stung in the side. It changed front instantly, to find itself then outflanked by Andry and in the way of the machine-guns that should have had clear play. Dick advanced; the guns overhead squandered ammunition, and Andry's contingent kept up a steady fusillade. The Cossacks could not help but fall back, and could not fall back on their own reserves.

Whoever commanded the attacking column was a Rupert of daring. He rallied his men, and faced them on their original objective, the guns. Then he charged Andry

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uphill in a savage effort to reach the guns before Dick could do anything to stop him, and trusting his commander and the reserves to deal with Dick.

But Dick trusted Andry, and with reason. The great Scot fell back slowly, stubbornly, with his back to the hill and the belching guns; and Dick thrust his men between the Russian column and its oncoming supports. A hellish fusillade from the Russian rear told him that Usbeg Ali had got around them and had begun the drive. The rest was a debacle.

Most of the column on the hill surrendered in the dark, rather than be shot down. Dick ordered their weapons taken from them, and then sent them marching, past and under the hill toward Persia; he had no time to waste on prisoners, nor men whom he could spare to guard them.

The Russian commander made a terrific effort to break back toward his commissariat with his main body and regain the road to Russia, but Usbeg Ali blocked the way, and he wasted thirty valuable minutes trying to save some of his supplies.

By that time Dick had sent two thousand men to add heft to the drive, and the prelude to the dawn, played by pale shafts of reflected sunlight on a saturated sky, showed the commander of the Russians cut off from his fleeing men, surrounded, and at bay.

THE field was a shambles. The confusion of the night had led to hand-to-hand conflicts in a dozen places, and nearly a thousand of Dick's men lay dead in tangled masses, mixed up with Cossacks who had charged them in the dark. Sick at heart with the sight of it, Dick gazed about him trying to see something that would cheer. It was the road to Russia, open and undefended, that gave him at last thoughts that were not so drear; and Andry came on him at gaze, staring northward, planning the next move in the game.

"Yon's their commander!" he said pointing. "He will na' surrender. What'll we du? Wad ye shoot the body in cauld bluid?"

"Order him off the field!" said Dick. "Send him after his fugitives into Persia!"

Andry grinned and walked off to obey. It was not for ten minutes that it dawned on Dick he had been ill-advised. A Russian commander, loose in Persia even without a command, might be a nuisance at his rear; as a prisoner of war he might be of certain use; as a hostage he would be good company. He sprang on his horse and cantered toward the hillock, on which the Russian and his staff had elected to make their last stand. As he rode he saw something that appalled him, and he spurred his tired charger into frantic effort.

The Russian commander appeared to have changed his mind; he could see him standing by Usbeg Ali Khan, and he saw that Usbeg Ali had the Russian's sword. They were standing at the foot of the hillock, looking upward, and shouting all together, prisoners and captors alike. He could see, even from that distance, that Usbeg Ali yelled approval, while most of the Russians roared dissent.

On the little hill stood Andry, at the brow of a twenty-five foot drop. He stood astride, his great thigh-muscles strained to the bursting point, and his knotted arms aloft. Gripped in his iron fingers up above his head he held the Princess Olga Karageorgovich, and she fought like a tiger-cat to free herself, in vain. She might as well have fought with Fate.

Deliberately, slowly, Andry whirled her around, and arched his huge muscles into one tremendous effort. He had begun to hurl her downward; she had actually started on the way to instant death when Dick galloped within pistol range, and his voice cracked like a whip.

"Stop!"

Andry stopped, and his grin of rage died as he saw Dick's pistol leveled at him—died and changed to a look of stupid grief.

"Set her down!"

The giant obeyed, and Dick lowered his pistol.

"Go!"

ANDRY stumbled down the hill and slunk away with his chin low on his breast. Dick rode closer to the hill, and the Princess looked down at him from its edge. She looked from him to a steel box at his feet, lying where Andry had hurled it preparatory to sending her after it.

"I'll bribe you," said Dick.

"With what, *monsieur, le bandit?*"

"With that box and its contents. I don't want you as prisoner, or with me on any terms. You may go. You may follow

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those fugitives that are being herded into Persia by my cavalry. I'll give you a horse. And as a reward for going you may take that box."

"*Monsieur le bandit* is crazy, but I will accept his terms!" she said in English.

She came down from the hill, picked up the box, and mounted a horse Dick ordered brought for her. Then she rode off with a merry laugh at him, and it was not until she was out of earshot that Usbeg Ali Khan found tongue, standing beside a Russian General who was his prisoner.

"She spoke of craziness, *bahadur!* For the first time I am tempted to agree with the daughter of Destruction!"

"Has the strain been too much for you, Usbeg Ali?"

It was difficult to judge the meaning of the note in Dick's voice. He, too, sounded a little strained.

"*Bahadur!* What is it less than madness to save that she-devil's life and on top of it to give her back the map and plans that are our key to victory? That box is worth a Rajah's ransom—nay, an Amir's! And you give it her! Those plans and that map are——"

Dick felt inside his shirt and pulled a package out.

"Here are the map and plans," he said.

"*Bahadur*, I——"

"That box contains blank paper and a few out-of-date muster-rolls."

"*Bahadur!* Sahib! I eat dirt! Bats shall be in my hair and beard until I am forgiven! Thou art a prince of wise men—nay, a wizard! *Bahadur*, beat me and I will endure it! Do anything, if only I am forgiven in that I called thee mad! Never will I offend again!"

"Count the dead!" said Dick. "Go around and shoot the injured horses. And if you see Andry MacDougal, order him to get his infantry in hand. I'm off to check the loot. Will you ride with me?" he asked, saluting the Russian General.

Usbeg Ali Khan saluted both of them and rode away; but he did not see Andry MacDougal. The big man was on his knees beside a girl's litter, sobbing into his hands.

"Lassie," he moaned, "if I'd murrrrdered her so I'd ne'er ha' forgiven masel! An' noo it's waur an' that, f'r Mr. Dicky saw, an' won't forget or forgive!"

"Poor little fellow!" she purred to him in French, patting his huge shoulder with a thin white hand.

The final adventure of *Dick Anthony of Arran* will appear complete in the March issue

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The Camp-Fire

A MEETING-PLACE for READERS, WRITERS and ADVENTURERS

IN "ADVENTURE" several months ago you read Stephen Chalmers' account of the death of Ralph Delamere Keefer, late of the Canadian Northwest Mounted Police. Also some stories by these men in collaboration. Now that we have in this issue a complete novel of his, let's have a word from Mr. Chalmers about himself. Later we'll hear some of his adventures in detail.

I was born at Dunoon, Scotland, on Feb. 29, 1880, and for the first seventeen years of my life adventured only with the laird's rabbits and trout and in respectable people's orchards. At the age of twelve, however, feeling that the Indians were retarding civilization in the Wild West, I ran away, intent upon taking up the white man's burden. I was captured sixty miles from home and brought home to finish my education.

At the age of seventeen I left home (with the parental blessing) and went to the West Indies, where I learned the trade of planting bananas. Lots of colorful experiences there. In 1901 I discovered a taste for writing and, after serving on West Indian newspapers, came to New York, where I served on the *World*, *Evening Post*, *Sun* and *Times*, handling for the most part "queer" stories. For instance, if the Schaghticoke Club went hunting rattlesnakes, I was sent along.

In 1907 I was sent to Jamaica as correspondent after the great earthquake and during the Swettenham-Davis row. About this time I began to write stories of adventure, but never thought then that my own adventures might be interesting—not until another journalist told me they were livelier than my fiction.

Since that time I have traveled in Panama, Colorado, Venezuela, and most of the islands. I have fished with the Fundy fishermen, hunted moose in New Brunswick and buck in the Adirondacks, writing novels and short stories in the intervals. I have quite given up newspaper work.

IN THE October Camp-Fire D. Wiggins, writing from Oregon, asked, "Can any one tell us about the cavalryman (not the Crow scout) who escaped from the Custer fight at the Little Big Horn?" Answers have begun to come in. If you can add anything to the following, go to it:

March, 1909, while spending a few days in Pittsburg, Kansas, I met with a man who claimed to be the only living survivor of the famous Custer Massacre (with the exception of the Crow Indian scout). I was looking at a large picture showing the Custer fight in colors. A man well up in years came up to me and at once launched into a history of the fight, said he was a scout under Custer and had been sent in another direction to look for the Sioux. During this trip he came upon the battle raging in the Big Horn Valley and, seeing that it was hopeless to get close, turned and fled for some fort or headquarters. If I remember right, he said he lived in Pittsburg, Kansas, and had for many years.

As to the Crow scout who survived, I believe my brother in Montana can give you definite information. I understand he knows this scout well and has talked to him frequently about this battle.

This slight clue may not do Mr. Wiggins any good, but if he can locate this cavalryman he surely has the goods on one of the finest stories imaginable.

S. K. ELDER, San Benito, Texas.

HERE is one that would seem to be authoritative:

Unless my memory is incorrect, the soldier in question was Private Thomas J. Callan of the 7th Cavalry. He was awarded a Medal of Honor for his heroism in this battle. My recollection of the matter is that Callan was sent by General Custer with a message to Major Reno just as the action began. I knew Callan personally. He died at Yonkers, N. Y., in March, 1908.

I have several books on Army and Navy Medal of Honor holders, but they are in storage at my home station, hence I am unable to furnish all the details, but I think that the above is correct.—GERALD E. CRONIN, 2d Lieutenant 9th U. S. Infantry, late member Executive Committee, Army and Navy Medal of Honor Legion of the U. S. A.

E. WARREN HOLMES also gives a clue, and presents another mystery along with it. Incidentally, Mr. Holmes tells me that, though now living near our Atlantic coast, he spent many years in the

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Pacific and still keeps in touch with every move there. Also, that he was one of the few Americans siding with the Revolutionary party in China and knew Sun Yat Sen and Tong King Ching well.

"Captain" Joe Kitchen, well known to artists in the Latin Quarter of San Francisco previous to the earthquake and last seen on the ranch of H. E. Pennell at Stege, outside of Berkeley, California, by the writer in 1908—at which time he figured to head into the last of the trapping territory in Washington—often spoke of this man. Captain Kitchen was an old-time scout of Reno's, and served also from '48 through the Civil War and later Indian wars.

He stated that he was scouting near the location of Custer's force under orders from Lieut. Reno when he came across his man, whom he assisted to safety, and in later years met in Placer County, Cal., some time in '93.

SPEAKING of Kitchen, I have seen men who have scars, but never in my varied experience have I met one who was so cut up and plugged full of holes. His body bore the marks of twenty-two bullet and knife cuts.

SPEAKING of adventurers, I wonder if there is any one who knows much of the Black Crater country in California. I once met a chap who came from those regions with a fist full of diamonds and took quite an interest in him. He told me a tale of hardship and the loss of his partner in that vicinity that would make your hair stand, and shortly afterward, while suffering from the strain of his hardships, became demented and committed suicide in a hotel in Oakland, Cal.

He had the largest black diamond I ever saw. It was cut in a crude fashion, and as a specimen was certainly some rock. After his death we tried to locate it but could not, which verified part of the yarn he told me. It was a plain case of self-destruction to all appearances, but there was a queer aspect to the circumstances: for instance, when found the body was in bed and the gas on, *but* there were blisters on his feet and three needle-marks in the skin of his right forearm in the form of a pyramid, and the blood had gathered under the nails of his right-hand fingers as it does from a sudden bruise. There were no marks on the thumb.

These things were noticed by an observing lady who lived in the hotel, to whom he had confided his tale and who always said he was murdered after being tortured to find the location of the diamond deposit. That there are diamond pipes there I know, but they are almost impossible to reach, owing to lack of water. Therefore have not been prospected.

WITH reference to the "Greenstone Mask." If the spinner of that yarn will drift into the Yucatan country he can find one like it cut in the face of a large cliff back of Mayapan. His story sounds good, and there is more good theory and fact to it than most people would think.

From my drifting in various parts of the Pacific I believe that some time or other there was a connection south as well as north with the Asiatic side, and that the old Toltecs of Mexico were descended from a race of men from the interior of Asia somewhere, and that the Aztecs were a northern race. You can find lots of evidence to this effect in Alaska, Oregon, Washington, California, New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado. The farther north the more pronounced the evidence, and in Alaska there are many figures and inscriptions which indicate that at some past period the same race passed through, leaving their imprint on what they left behind. The farther south you go, the more finished the imprint, owing possibly to climatic and natural conditions.—E. WARREN HOLMES.

In my short and uneventful roamings about the Northwest I too have heard of the cavalryman who escaped. An old rancher down in the Yellowstone country of Montana told me that a trooper had made his getaway successfully, but that he had been crazed by his experience and wounds and died some weeks later. How true this is I can not say, but it was called to mind by Wiggins' query. I have often heard my father, who was a pioneer of Montana, speak of the Crow scout who is said to have escaped by merely "playing 'possum" until the fight was over.

WIGGINS speaks of interesting characters he has met. Up in Oakland, which has been my home for the past fifteen years—off and on—is a little, meek old chap who, according to rumor, apparently well-founded, was a member of the attacking party in the Mountain Meadows massacre. I also have a friend there who has in his possession the only Victoria Cross I have ever seen outside of museums. How he came by it I don't know, for he's tongue-tied on the subject.—W. C. W.

ANOTHER letter from Mr. Wiggins on the Custer scout, and mentioning the *Marie Céleste* mystery and other matters. The question about the breech-loaders, mentioned in his letter, is: Were they in use in the Indian Mutiny? as I believe Talbot Mundy stated in one of his stories. If not, what about those cartridges said to be one cause of the Mutiny, since the native soldiers refused to bite them because they were greased with hog-fat?

Now, this battle has always held my attention as has no other affair of the kind. I presume that it is because we can come to no satisfactory conclusion in regard to what actually happened. The field showed that the troopers fought bravely, and that they were crushed by superior numbers. In this respect it bears a close resemblance to the Shangani Patrol of the Matabele War.

My father at one time met a man who claimed that he had been with the doomed troops, and that he was captured by the Indians. Held prisoner for years, he finally escaped. I regard stories like this, of which I have heard quite a number, as sheer buncombe.

ABOUT all I ever got that seemed to hold water was the account of the escape of a farrier, Gustave Korn by name. It is stated in Joseph Mills Hanson's book, "The Conquest of the Missouri,"

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that Korn was with one of the troops that followed Custer into the village. That his horse was shot and became unmanageable. Bolting from the ranks, the crazed animal tore through the Indians and fell dead only a short distance from Reno's men. Thus it is supposed that Korn was the only man who escaped after the battle actually commenced. He was one of the first men killed at Wounded Knee.

I have read that one of the Sioux chiefs claimed that one white soldier got clear, and that after the war he saw and talked with him. I wrote in hopes of getting some track of this man, if possible.

I am writing to the Pension Dept. at Washington to learn, if possible, where Captain Kitchen is at the present time; if living he can probably tell us more about that man he claimed to have rescued. But I personally doubt if the details of that tragic affair ever become known.

YOU spoke of the *Marie Céleste;* I am very anxious to read the article you have been so fortunate as to secure. That, together with the fate of Johann Orth, constitute the greatest mysteries of the sea.

I NOTE that you sent my letter to Talbot Mundy. Well, I'll probably find out about those breech-loaders now. I hope so, as I happen to be one of the worst "gun-cranks" in the Northwest. Everything I can learn is meat and drink to me in that line. But I am sure that the Snider alteration of the Enfield muzzle-loader was the first breech-loader in use in the British Army, at least in general use. This is stated, by the authorities I have consulted, as having taken place about 1867.—DON WIGGINS.

HERE is one from an Army officer whose stories you have been reading in *Adventure:*

I am in a position to state positively and authoritatively that in the fight with the Sioux Indians Custer was engaged with five companies of the Seventh Cavalry. Not a human being escaped from these five companies alive. One horse, *Comanche,* ridden by Captain Keogh, escaped and was for years cared for by the regiment. His stuffed skin stands to-day in the museum at Topeka, Kansas.

Two scouts did escape, however, from Reno's column, which was not with Custer, and later rejoined.

Of late many men have reappeared, or rather appeared, claiming to have been with Custer. They are one and all impostors. Every man who was with Custer died in his tracks or rather in his circle. I am told that the line of the dead was unbroken—that no man even tried to make his escape.

I have this personally from an officer who served for over thirty years with the Seventh Cavalry and who knows whereof he speaks.

GEO. B. RODNEY,
Captain Fifth Cavalry.

THOS. J. BUCHANAN also wrote concerning one of the 7th Cavalry who, he says, escaped from Custer's command. Asked for further information, his second letter stated he has written for the exact details and is in correspondence with Mr. Wiggins. Meanwhile he gives us the main points:

His name is Lew Milligan and he lives in Huntington, Ind., his birthplace. His father, of whom I spoke, was Col. Lambdin P. Milligan, who died in 1899. Lew told me that there were absolutely no survivors of the massacre who took part in the battle. He was saved by being sent back by Custer with dispatches to Major Reno's command, requesting him to hurry forward, as he (Custer) was hard pressed. Reno sent seventy-five Crow scouts in advance, who came back and reported that they could not get through as there were too many Indians. "I knew right then that it was all day with Custer," said Lew, and described the unprintable mutilations of Custer's command.

I GIVE here another bit from one of Mr. Wiggins's letters, bearing upon the death of H. D. Couzens, who was a personal friend of many of us as well as a writer of good stories:

So Couzens has passed down the "Long Trail." Well, we will miss him and *Billy Engelchart* sadly. For there was a free openness to his yarns that seemed to bring back the smell of the salt spray to me. Well, I wager he went as the rest of the Vikings passed, with a smile for the Pale Rider. Skole!

YOU will remember Captain W. Robert Foran's intended expedition to Africa, the Pacific and other parts of the world, as set forth at a previous Camp-Fire. The European War knocked it on the head and some little time ago he came in to see me while in New York, waiting for the sailing of the *Olympic.* He was on his way home to report to the British War Office for active service. Here's good luck to him and to all the other Camp-Fire men who have taken part in that great struggle.

AS TO W. B. Hanna's "Bug Cole and the Triple Squeeze" in a former number. Here's a letter from a ball-player in one of the far Western leagues:

I will venture to call your attention to a recent vindication of the triple squeeze of fiction. According to the news, it seems that the Yankees attempted a squeeze play with three on. The batter's effort resulted in a lob over the close-in infielders, and Peckinpaugh, who was on first, pulled a "Bug Cole" and followed two team-mates to a safe registration.

EDGAR WALLACE has a story in this issue. You've probably been seeing his name as one of the correspondents on the European War. He is ranked as one of the

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very best. Among other things, he got the greatest "beat" of the Boer War—the terms of peace three days before they were officially made known. British stock rose $150,000,000 on his cables. We've met him at our Camp-Fire before this, and know that he entered the English army at seventeen and served through the Mashonaland rebellion and the Benin Expedition. And he was editor of the London *Evening News* at twenty-nine.

Here is one of the incidents that won him the nickname of "the Sherlock Holmes of correspondents":

During the Algeciras conference which was to decide the fate of Morocco there was a rumor among the small army of newspaper men that the King of Italy had laid before the conference certain suggestions which the ministers had accepted. There was a frantic rush to the telegraph-office to wire news of the settlement.

The correspondents had seen the Italian secretary go to the private telegraph-office and hand in his dispatch. Wallace went alone to the office.

"I want to send a wire to London," he said. "When will you have a clear line?"

The clerk looked at his desk. "I've a 'confidential' here," he said, "that will take me half an hour to send. I could wire three or four words for you, but nothing longer."

"That's enough," said the correspondent; "wire '*Daily Mail*, London: Italian effort conciliation abortive.'"

This proved to be so; the other news men said he had guessed it. But this was *not* so.

"I knew the King of Italy was keen on his Ambassador's settling the dispute; I knew that he wired certain proposals to be immediately placed before the conference. Why, then, should the Ambassador take twenty pages to answer if he was successful? If he had persuaded the conference he would have sent two wires. One short 'hooray' wire, and one how-I-did-it wire. No hooray wire went—hence the expression 'cold feet.'"

VICTOR HOPE is putting in the time circumnavigating South America *en route* to elsewhere. This card from him written at Buenos Aires was postmarked there August 24th, but did not reach me till October 5th. Perhaps it, too, had adventures on the way:

Buenos Aires.

Was 28 days getting here. Held up in Bahia by German cruiser. I was on S. S. *Vauban*. Leave tonight for interior. Going fast, eh?

AS TO one of the mysteries we're running down—that of General Hector Macdonald. Neil H. Wilson of Toronto sends us the following startling report. If Macdonald really does lie in a suicide's grave, it is truly remarkable how the rumor that he still lives under another name refuses to be quieted. I'm told it's current in every regimental mess in the English army, and again and again it comes to us from informants scattered all over the world. Nearly all of them fix on the Far East as the scene of his activities following his "death," either in the interior of China or in the Russo-Japanese War, though they vary as to whether he served China, Russia or Japan. Now comes this report of his still later operations.

Mr. Wilson also states it has been conclusively proven that the charges made against Macdonald in Ceylon, which resulted in his recall and disgrace, would now, in the light of later knowledge, fail to be sustained if a new trial were possible.

I think I can rightly claim to have been the first reader of *Adventure* in Canada and the most constant since the first issue. Have had one article in "Camp-Fire," and here is another you may use. Unfortunately I can't give you any authority for the information, but it is *direct* and authentic.

Major-General Sir Hector Macdonald is at the head of the Russian Army in the present European War. I have it direct from two widely different sources, and only wish I could at this time give you my authority for the statement, but it would necessarily bring in the names of two officers high up in the English service. They recall the fact that Gen. Kuropatkin was supposedly Hector Macdonald, and say he has been, and is now, at the head of the mobilization staff in Russia, which possibly accounts for the surprisingly wonderful mobilization the Russians have made.

Here's hoping it's true, and that Major-General Sir Hector Macdonald will before long again assume, with all the honor and glory that is his due, his rightful name and place in the world.

WE'VE already read firemen stories by Carrington Boykin, and there's another in this issue. Here's a word from him to you about himself:

By nature I am a rover, but sad to relate belong to that class of rovers whose wanderings are somewhat limited. In 1908 I entered West Point from Virginia, and being more or less of a fool, I proceeded to shatter every regulation formulated for discipline there. I must have regarded the whole affair as somewhat of a frolic, and in 1910 found myself facing a charge that, though untrue, was backed by circumstances. I was dismissed subsequently, carrying with me, however, the sympathy of my classmates and all who knew me there. Since then I have been reporting on one of the New York dailies; the newspaper game has all sorts of false-alarms, covering everything from one-alarm fires to murders, divorces and holocausts. Any one who has ever been a "lobster man" at Police Headquarters can say that he has had some adventure.

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THE next letter from California, dated September, gives news of Gen. Clifford Sands, who has had bad luck in Central America.

I write to inform you that Gen. Clifford Sands was wounded four times on the morning of July 5, at Bluefields, Nicaragua; was deported from the country, and passed through here on his way home to Seattle on last Tuesday, the 8th. He has lost the use, for good, of his left hand, and, the right having become infected, is in danger of losing the right arm below the elbow. He was in haste to get to Seattle and a hospital, to have an operation performed, in hopes of saving it. He had lain four days without proper medical treatment. An attempt was made to get from him the names of the other parties to the conspiracy. We may be proud to say, however, that they are as wise as they were before.

THE Nicaraguan affair had nothing to do with the expedition projected a year ago, but was concerned with the independence of the east coast of Nicaragua, a thing long projected under the name of the Republic of Caribbee. Owing to General Sands being wounded at the beginning of the engagement and placed *hors de combat*, thus leaving his men leaderless, the attempt was a fiasco. Left without a leader, they became panic-stricken and fled, as is usually the case down there, as I know to my sorrow.

As Sands is laid up for some time to come, the expedition projected a year ago is off indefinitely, and we wish you would make an announcement to that effect. Gen. Sands' address will be the same as before in Seattle, where letters will reach him.

YOUR enclosures of answers to my own ad. have been received in good shape. Please accept my thanks for same. I have been able to place a few of the men, but one affair has fallen through owing to the failure of negotiations with the Government through whose territory the party intended to operate. Another is off indefinitely owing to the fact that the man who promoted it, being an officer in the British reserves, reported to his colors and is now at the seat of war. I, too, am liable to take up my commission and leave for the front, should I deem it possible the country needs my services.

CHAS. ALEXANDER.

A YEAR or so ago an article, purporting to be written by a survivor of the *Marie Céleste*, was published in magazines and newspapers both in this country and England. Our old friend Captain F. E. Van Leue, and others who know the sea and ships, found so many weak places in this "survivor's" account that they asked me to present the matter to the Camp-Fire.

AS PREVIOUSLY stated, we seem to have been forestalled in solving the mystery of the *Marie Céleste*. W. H. Davis, who, you will remember, helped us solve the Bully Hayes mystery, sent me copies of the *Nautical Gazette* for Dec. 17, 24 and 31, 1913, and Jan. 28, 1914, in which the riddle seems to be answered satisfactorily. What follows is a brief outline of the above:

The American brigantine *Mary Céleste* (not the *Marie* or *Maria Céleste* as she is perhaps more frequently spoken of), loaded with oil and spirits, set sail from New York in November, 1872, bound for the Mediterranean.

Early in December she was found a derelict by the British vessel *Dei Gratia* and towed into Gibraltar. The vessel was sound and the cargo intact, but one hatch was displaced, one boat missing, and there were certain blood-stains on the deck. Not a soul found on board, and the chronometer missing.

THE story of Capt. J. H. Winchester, the ship's owner at the time, is related by his grandson. Capt. Winchester saw the boat before it sailed, and examined it at Gibraltar after it had been found deserted. He scouted the ideas of pirates or a mutiny, and held the following theory:

Gas and vapor, generated by the cargo during warm weather, caused spontaneous combustion after a spell of rough sea and suddenly the hatch was blown off. The hatch was found bottom side up—a position in which no sailor would ever put it.

Panic seized the crew, who feared a second explosion, and all—including the captain, his wife and child—got away safely in the small boat, the captain taking the chronometer.

Ventilation cooled the cargo, thus allaying the danger, and the vessel, with full sail set, quickly ran away, outdistancing the small boats, whose occupants eventually perished.

THE blood-stains on the deck were caused by the hatch striking a member of the crew. An old sword, also found stained, was probably being scoured by the cook in order to cut the meat, when the accident occurred.

Ill luck seemed ever to hover over the *Mary Céleste*. Originally a British ship, the *Amazon*, launched in 1860, her first captain died after a few weeks; she ran down another brig in the Straits of Dover, and was herself wrecked at Glace Bay, N. S. Then she was sold to Americans, rebuilt and rechristened.

Subsequent to her mysterious accident on the high sea, she was stranded on a reef in the West Indies. Her captain was indicted for barratry and conspiracy and, acquitted of the latter charge, died three months later.

AT LAST reports there were some eight or nine publishers after book-rights on our friend *Come-On Charley;* one of the biggest of the movie companies wanted him badly for the screen, and an interested manager was negotiating for him for the stage. I can't resist saying "I told you so." For I predicted—in print—when you first met him that he would appear later between book-covers and on the stage. But, hang it all, I went and forgot the movies!

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HERE is a letter from Carl M. Chapin, whose firemen stories you will remember. I think he states a sentiment that is shared by most of our *Adventure* writers.

I don't know how other writers feel, but personally I wish you would start a crusade to educate readers to "write to the author about it." The reader's view-point is a powerful help to the youngster in the game, and it's hard to get. I have striven conscientiously to avoid the impossible, not to make ordinary men perform like angels or salamanders—as they do in movie fires. Sometimes I have to sigh when I see another fellow short-cutting to fame and shekels by perpetrating stunts which no living fireman ever will be able to perform. If I get careless myself, I want to know it.—CARL M. CHAPIN.

THE LEGION. All wishing to join legion of experienced adventurers to serve the country in time of war and get to the front quickly, write DR. J. E. HAUSMANN, 709 W. 169, New York City, (in charge temporary organization.) Fuller notice next month.

HERE, again, is the brief explanation of our identification-cards. They are offered free of charge to any of you. All we ask is that you comply carefully with the simple directions as they appear below in italics:

The cards bear this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, U. S. A., stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. The names and addresses will be treated as confidential by us. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for purposes of business identification. Later, arrangements may perhaps be made for money deposits to cover cable or telegraph notifications. Cards furnished free of charge, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application. Send no applications without the two names and two addresses in full.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later, for the cost of manufacture, we may furnish, instead of the above cards, a card or tag of aluminum, proof against heat, water, and general wear and tear, for adventurers when actually in the jungle, desert, etc.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give the two names and addresses in full when applying.*

FULL data on the Adventurers' Club will be sent from this office on request, though the Club has no connection with the Camp-Fire or *Adventure.*

INFORMATION DIRECTORY

IMPORTANT: Only items like those below can be printed—standing sources of information. No room on this page to ask or answer specific questions. Recommend no source of information you are not *sure* of. False information may cause serious loss, even loss of life. *Adventure* does its best to make this directory reliable, but assumes no responsibility therefor.

For data on the Amazon country write Algot Lange, care Explorers' Club, 345 Amsterdam Ave., New York City. Replies only if stamped, addressed envelope is enclosed and only at Mr. Lange's discretion, this service being purely voluntary.

For the Banks fisheries, Frederick William Wallace, editor *Canadian Fisherman*, 35 St. Alexander St., Montreal. Same conditions as above.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii and Alaska, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Ag., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wasn., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

CAN you add any reliable sources of adventure information to our new Information Directory above? Read carefully the note marked "Important."

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

WANTED —MEN

NOTE.—We offer this corner of the Camp-Fire, free of charge, to our readers. Naturally we can not vouch for any of the letters, the writers thereof, or any of the claims set forth therein, beyond the fact that we receive and publish these letters in good faith. We reserve the privilege of not publishing any letters or parts of a letter. Any inquiry for men sent to this magazine will be considered as intended for publication, at our discretion, in this department, with all names and addresses given therein printed in full, unless such inquiry contains contrary instructions. In the latter case we reserve the right to substitute for real names any numbers or other names. We are ready to forward mail through this office, but assume no responsibility therefor. **N.B.—Items asking for money rather than men will not be published.**

WOULD like to meet three or four fellows between 20 and 35 who are full of life and would like to see a good lively exciting time, and the same time take the chance of making a heap of money. I am going to Sonora, Mexico, prospecting for gold. There is plenty of gold in the streams and creeks, if any man is game enough to go get it. I am going sluice-box mining (that is what they call poor man's mining). Will have the Yaqui Indian and Mexican to contend with.—Address TEDDY HARVEY, Phoenix, Ariz.

PARTNER, amateur armchair strategist preferred, to play a war game with me. Have something radically different and more realistic than any except H. G. Wells'! An interested player, after ten minutes' consideration of essentials, can bring into play every possibility of the game. This may give some neutral—preferably a resident of Manhattan; age, race or religion immaterial—an opportunity to be a Hohenzollern or a Joffre with no personal risk.—Address JAS. V. P. SMITH, 84 Grove St., Manhattan.

TWO men to start trading company to go to Colombia, South America, to trade with Indians for ivory, gold, and rubber.—Address BEN ORTH, R. F. D. No. 1, Yuma, Arizona.

ANY ONE knowing of the Chamelicon River, Spanish Honduras, as to the possibility of a flat-bottomed power boat, drawing 10 in., reaching the town of Macuelito: also the number of cataracts, rapids likely to be encountered en route.—Address S. V. P., W 257.

MAN who can navigate small craft from Connecticut to Panama. I expect to sail late in the year on my 40 ft. Herreshoff sloop, pass through Panama Canal, and proceed up Pacific Coast to Exposition at San Francisco. Am fully equipped with charts and instruments and would like to hear from some capable, congenial adventurer who would like to go along.—Address CHARLES C. DODGE, Mystic, Conn.

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relatives Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

RECKLESS, where are you? Important! Your home is broken up.—Address L. T. 258.

DOTE (GOLDEN) SHERWOOD, last heard of in Salt Lake City in 1912. Height about 5 ft. 3 1-2 in.; brown curly hair; large brown eyes.—Address TOM GIBBONS, Tonopah, Nevada.

M. E. SNIDER, last heard of in Waco or Corpus Christi, Texas.—Address I. A. SNIDER, S. P. passenger depot, Salem, Ore.

DAN MEADE, my friend at Napa Business College 1908-09. Broke strike in S. F. '07. Home once near Buffalo, N. Y. Old friend wishes to learn his whereabouts. —Address L. T. 256.

DON, you have made a terrible mistake and caused much suffering.—Address PETE, care *Adventure.*

GOSTA LARSSON, left Stockholm, Sweden, Jan. 1911. Last heard from Campbell River, B. C., Canada. Write for news.—Address BERTIE LINDH, Bridge Water, N. S., Canada.

GUST RHODE, left Grant County, Minn., about eleven years ago, no word from him since. Age 30. Parents offer reward for information as to his present whereabouts. —Address JOHN RHODE, Herman, Minn.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

DALE L. YOUNG, my son, disappeared Washington, D. C., Aug. 12, 1914. Supposed to have gone to Pittsburgh, Pa.—Address MRS. HARLEY J. MOTZ, 1006 Elm St., Rochester, Ind.

I AM foundling or orphan. Raised by Mrs. Mary or Mrs. Samuel Madison. Lived Stanton, Mich., until 5, then Chicago and later Wisconsin. She refused to tell me my name, but told the people I worked for that she was not my mother, and my name was supposed to be Manchester. Am small brunette, 5 ft. 1 in., brown eyes and hair, mole on left hip. Can any one tell me who I am? I long for a mother's and father's love.—Address MRS. WILLIAM ROSS, Grand Union Hotel, St. Cloud, Minn.

JOSEPH CARHART, coxswain U. S. N. 1902. Run down by torpedo-boat in Culebra Bay, West Indies, while acting as coxswain of steam launch. Was with me in the San Juan Hospital. Write me at once. Would be glad to hear from all my old shipmates.—Address V. V. BARNES, 407 N. Pearl St., Joplin, Mo.

JAMES R. PETTIT, soldier, 1896-08. Service at Ft. Thomas and Alaska. Last heard of Spring, 1908, in Alaska. Fear murder. Had trouble with two claim-jumpers. Age 38, very dark, weighs 165 lbs. Canadian papers please copy.—Address E. M. VAN ORMAN, 2 East 20th St., Covington, Ky.

AUGUST FREDERICK WILLIAM SPIERING, father, has not been heard from in six years. Said he was going to sea. Had a captain's license, but generally takes the first or second mate's position on whaling vessels. —Address LILLIAN SPIERING, Veterans' Home, Napa County, Cal.

JACK SNEAD, structural iron-worker. Last seen Dec., 1912, at Jim Barker's "Tropico Hotel" in Coatepeque, Guatemala, where he was on his way to Brown's construction camp on the Pan-American line, near San Mighelita. —Address S. J. L., care *Adventure.*

WILLIAM McCLELLAN, who went to Kimberley, South Africa, about thirty-five years ago from Wilkesbarre, Pa. Last heard of he was shoe-dealer in Kimberley, South Africa, on Du Toits Pan.—Address P. H. MCCLELLAN, 150 West Fourth St., Williamsport, Pa.

PAUL V. REEVES, brother. Last heard from Manila, P. I., Jan. 1900, with H. Ford, Sup't Trans.—Address MRS. J. C. SHAFFER, 519 So. Cinn, Tulsa, Okla.

CHARLES N. TURNER, home Monterey, Mexico. Father dead, mother needs him.—Address MRS. L. D. TURNER, 719 Ogden St., San Antonio, Texas.

HARRY R. FIELDS, last heard of when we landed in New York City, coming home from Panama. Think he is around Pueblo, Colo.—Address HENRY H. VANECEK, 187 3rd St., Passaic, N. J.

FRANK B. FELLOWS, govt. surveyor Indian Territory in 1896-97-98. Later in Alaska. Last heard of in Atlin, B. C., 1899.—Address GEO. H. MEEK, 3317 Allen Ave., Sacramento, Cal.

JACK MANZEY, pal of former years. Last heard of in Kansas City, Kansas, about four years ago. Information gladly received by old friend.—Address JOHN R. COOK, 1519 Brooklyn Ave., Kansas City, Mo.

FRANK KERNOHAN, last heard of in Greenwood, B. C., about seventeen years ago. Has brown hair and eyes and a large scar over right eye on eyebrow.—Address MRS. H. E. DOW, Fort Fairfield, Maine.

EDWARD G. BROWN, last heard of in "The Dalles Country," Oregon. — Address JEFF. D. BURKE, 136 Stuyvesant Place, St. George, Staten Island, N. Y.

SHIPMATES on Hamburg-American Line tramp *Sarnia,* New York to Frontera, Mexico, June 2nd to 21st, 1913, write.—Address R. L. CONNER, 517 N. Union St., Kokomo, Ind.

CAPT. JACK BONAVITA and "English Jack of the Congo." Was mine electrician at Glen Jean, W. Va., where I met Capt. Jack with the carnival. If the Capt. is fitting out his trading schooner, would like to go along. Am prepared. Would also like to hear from Mr. Ford, of Ford's Ostrich Farm, Tampa, Florida.—Address ROBERT HYDE, care of *Adventure.*

PERCY JOHN BEDELL, age 26 years; height 5 ft. 10 1-2 in.; complexion fair. Good shot with rifle or revolver. Last heard of at Spokane, Wash., working as scaler. —Address J. BEDELL, Hamilton P. O. Gen Del., Hamilton, Ont., Canada.

GEORGE D. TIBBITSON, formerly Co. D, 13th Inf.; last heard from at Honolulu en route to P. I. with 13th Inf. in 1906.—Address G. R. (DICK) BELLINGER, 271 Broad St., Tonawanda, N. Y.

ALL members of Co. M—1—2.—Address S. M. O'SULLIVAN, 316 Taylor St., San Francisco, Cal. (National Bldg.), Ex Army and Navy Men of the World, 750 B. Howard St., S. F.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

CARL F. MORROW, if you will write I'll sell out and go where you wanted me to go—California. I am where you last wrote.—Address your mother.

COL. ROBERT B. WILSON, my brother. Last heard of in 1881 in New York City. Had office at 63 Broadway, N. Y. Lived at Prospect Hotel.—Address MRS. KATE R. HOPKINS, Box 227, Tampa, Fla.

CARL JEFFERSON, alias "Jeff." Last seen on Commercial St., San Francisco.—Address JACK IRVING, Berkeley Y. M. C. A., Berkeley, Cal.

GOFF, or Goef, last name unknown. Walked with him from Missoula to Butte.—Address CHET, care *Adventure.*

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JOSEPH GILBERTSON. Left Edinburgh, Scotland, 26th March, 1883, for Australia. Last heard from him 30th Sept. 1899; was leaving Brisbane, Queensland, with four others for north on a prospecting trip. Was in Broadwater, Richmond River, N. S. W., for seven or eight years, and in Coolgardie, Western Australia, for some time.—Address JAMES M. GILBERTSON, care *Adventure*.

CAROL D. RAY, brother, last heard of on farm near Pawhuska, Oklahoma, Summer of 1913. Smooth oval face; dark eyes; dark-brown hair; about 5 ft. 7 in. tall; stocky build; age 19; near-sighted.—Address MRS. C. W. SNAKENBERG, Bar 9 Ranch, Adrian, Texas.

VETERINARY surgeon from Indianapolis with whom I sailed from New Orleans on the SS. *Anglo-Chilean* for South Africa in Sept. 1901. Later was in Crowley, La.—Address DAVID J. DAVIES, Sporting Editor Pittsburgh Dispatch, Pittsburgh, Pa.

TWENTY-FIVE dollars reward for information of whereabouts of Blayney Leslie if alive (or if dead, of the time, place and manner of his death). Left Chicago about 1894; was then 18 years of age. Was heard of shortly after from Ash Fork, Arizona, working in bridge gang of Santa Fé Railroad. Since then all trace of him has been lost.—Address JOHN LESLIE, 4223 S. Halsted St., Chicago, Ill.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

RALPH DUNN. Please write Eastern Oregon friend of your piano days.—Address L. T. 253.

MADERO'S Foreign Legion Members during 1911. Especially comrades of Capt. Harrington's Company in the battle of Casas Grandes.—Address CHAS. H. DARLINGTON, Santa Barbara, Cal.

FRED NELSON. Your chum who crossed in the SS. *Ionian* with you, arriving at St. John, N. B., on March 17th, 1907, would like to hear from you.—Address FRED TONKIN, Boisé, Idaho.

JAMES COMFORT, last heard of in Lepanto, Ark. Canadian papers please copy.—Address QUINLAN COMFORT, Box 234, Lawrenceville, Ga.

LEONARD BOLTON, son, age 24. Last heard from at Tacoma, Wash., en route to Portland, Ore. No news for three years.—Address MRS. HAMMOND, Nelson, B. C.

URITA. Any one knowing or bearing this surname write. Matter of greatest importance. Canadian papers copy.—Address CHARLES U. CUMMINGS, 722 Stanford Ave., Los Angeles, Calif.

JOHN L. MORELAND, last heard of in Gila Bend, Arizona, Oct. 1, 1912. Employed in quartz mine.—Address A. J. MORELAND, New Wilmington, Pa.

HENRY ROACH. Last heard of in Lewisbury, Mass., in 1868. Originally lived Boston.—Address JAMES ROACH, 423 Hickory, Texarkana, Ark.

THE following have been inquired for in full in the December and January issues of ADVENTURE. They can get the name of inquirer from this magazine:

BRADLEY, Alonzo; Butterbaugh, Christian M.; Carirco, Ralph; Coiner, Carl; Dies, Arthur W.; Dobbert, Ed., "Kid"; Drennan, John Matthew; Fairfax, Donald C.; Guhl, Henry; Hammond, Paul C.; Hickman, Bob; Holbrook, Elmer H.; McArthur, William; Penney, J. C.; Pogoda, Albert; Rice, Charles B.; Sandberg, Fred ("Hobart"); Sipes, Hubert E.; Taylor, James C. and wife, Margaret Dillon Taylor.

MISCELLANEOUS—Brother, last seen in 1909; Hoffman, S. G., and Claude Simmons.

NUMBERS 56, 68, 73, 76, W 93, W 107, W 140, W 150, W 153, W 183, W 184, W 189, W 195, W 203, W 211, W 212, W 215, C 189, C 205, L T. 207, L. T. 239. Please send us your present addresses. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us do not reach you.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care *Adventure*.

RANDOLPH H. ATKIN, please send us your present address. Mail sent to you at addresses given us doesn't reach you.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care *Adventure*.

THOMAS TRACY, Paso del Macho, Mexico. Mail sent to above address does not reach you. Please send present address.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care *Adventure*.

MANUSCRIPTS sent us by the following are being held by us, having been returned to us as unclaimed at the addresses furnished:

W. Lynch, Trenton, N. J.; W. Mack, Pacheca, Mexico; Dorothy Bayless, Adams Co., Ohio; Henry W. Edwards, New York; W. G. Gormley, Ontario, Canada; George Stillons, Chicago, Ill.; Francis Manston, Chicago, Cal.; Charles E. Mack, New York; James Perry, Brooklyn, N. Y.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

AS ANNOUNCED in the July issue, every item will be published three times, then taken out. But in the *January* and *July* numbers of each year we will publish the names of all who have been inquired for and remain unfound.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

THE MARCH ADVENTURE

THE TESTING OF GASPARD DURANT — *By Henry Oyen*

Another story of the snows by the author of "The Snow-Burner."

HUNTED — *By Carrington Boykin*

A man-hunt in New York City that will keep your nerves tense to the end.

THE ADVENTURERS — *By Arthur A. Nelson*

The third instalment of this strong four-part story of unknown Africa.

AROUND THE BASES — *By Octavus Roy Cohen*

A tale of the diamond—one you'll remember.

THE THIRD CHANCE — *By S. B. H. Hurst*

A weak man with vengeance in his heart. War—war at sea.

THE HIGHGRADER. A Novel — *By William MacLeod Raine*

A complete, full book length story of the West.

COME-ON CHARLEY BUYS A BUBBLE — *By Thomas Addison*

Come-On tries his hand in an entirely new field.

ON TERMS. Novelette — *By Talbot Mundy*

Dick Anthony's last and greatest adventure in Persia. Complete novelette.

THE WANDERING SON. Novelette — *By Raymond S. Spears*

A colorful story of the Mississippi River. Complete novelette.

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Elec. Lighting Supt.	Bookkeeping
Electric Car Running	Stenography&Typewriting
Electric Wireman	Window Trimming
Telephone Expert	Show Card Writing
Architect	Lettering & Sign Painting
Building Contractor	Advertising
Architectural Draftsman	Commercial Illustrating
Structural Engineer	Industrial Designing
Concrete Construction	Commercial Law
Mechan. Engineer	Automobile Running
Mechanical Draftsman	Teacher
Refrigeration Engineer	English Branches
Civil Engineer	Good English for Every One
Surveyor	Agriculture
Mine Superintendent	Poultry Farming
Metal Mining	Plumbing & Steam Fitting
Railway Accounting	Sheet Metal Worker
Stationary Engineer	Navigation Spanish
Textile Manufacturing	Languages French
Gas Engines	Chemist German

Name_____

Present Occupation_____

Street and No._____

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sufficient emphasis has not been placed on the possibility of every man holding a partial solution of this grave question in his own hands, of every consumer being his own producer. At an expense of a few dollars in seeds and fertilizers, a small plot of ground, even so small as 25 x 50 feet, will grow all the vegetables an average family will consume. During the summer half of your living expense is for the things that should come out of your own garden. Latter day methods and higher quality of seeds have made it possible to cultivate a small tract so that with a reasonable amount of fertilization and planted with seeds of high germination it should supply all the vegetables required by a family of six or seven. You do not have to share the profits of your own garden with jobbers, middlemen or retailers.

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